

Weekly Column  
Korean Newspaper



Melvin University  
and Me

## The meaning of household

Nowadays, the meaning of family or household has changed a lot. In the past, we used to think that a family with 'parents and children' was normal, but nowadays there are many different types of families.

Pastor Melvin also mentioned this, and it seems that the United States has experienced this much longer than Korea. He used the expression 'under one roof' and mentioned nine types.

1. Nuclear family household: Father, mother, and children all live under the same roof.
2. Empty nest household: A couple with no children.
3. Single parent household: A household with only a father or mother and children.
4. One-person household: A person living alone, such as in a house, apartment, dormitory, nursing home, or retirement home.
5. Interracial family household: Two people of different races living together with their children, if any.
6. 'Mr Mon' household: When roles are reversed. The husband stays home and the wife goes to work.
7. Multi-adult household: Single people who are not related by blood (also known as 'virtual relatives'), youth, elderly, disabled, or homeless people living together.
8. Cohabiting household: People living together without legal marriage.
9. Same-sex family household: A family headed by a gay and lesbian couple, with or without children.

I believe that everyone falls into one of these categories, and this is true across the globe, not only in the United States, Korea, and Africa, but also in other

parts of the world. There are probably many other categories beyond the nine above.

Melvin's paper is about how to care for these different families and households from a lay pastoral care perspective. In fact, he suggests that it is difficult for a single pastor to care for such a variety of families and households, and that trained lay workers (lay pastor, lay minister) should be in charge of this ministry under the leadership of the senior pastor.

In the current situation, many families are marginalised if they expect only the traditional 1) family, so they need to be prepared and trained to care for all nine, arguing that human beings should be loved and cared for no matter who they are or what kind of family they are. Lay ministers are called to care for these different types of people.

We may be missing half of the 'flock of God' if we limit our care to the nuclear family (#1), and we will not be able to effectively care for other types of families if we only understand the characteristics of the nuclear family. Lay workers are in a unique position to love and care for people without judging, homogenising, correcting or trying to change them. As long as people profess faith in Jesus Christ and remain members of the church, lay workers should be committed to loving and caring for them.

In doing so, Melvin laid out four principles. Jesus cared for the woman caught in adultery. He kept Judas among the twelve and loved Peter even though he knew Peter would deny being one of his disciples. Four principles from Jesus' relationships with the woman, Judas, and Peter can guide lay workers in bringing "skin-in-the-game" love to every family in the church: 1) Jesus came to save, not condemn. 2) Accepting a person does not mean that everything they do is acceptable. 3) Jesus' standards did not mean compromising His closeness to people who lived by different standards; and 4) He loved to the end.

Jesus' challenge to his disciples after these difficult teachings, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them," is a challenge to lay workers today. Who can doubt that the Lord expects lay workers to grow in their understanding of the characteristics of different families and learn the skills needed to love and care for them?