

Families of the Bible

A Bible Study Course for Adults

by

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Student Lessons

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Lesson One

Made for Each Other

The Story of the First Family

Worship

ALL: Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

WOMEN: *Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*

MEN: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . . . In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.*

ALL: For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

LEADER: This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

MEN: *However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself,*

WOMEN: *And the wife must respect her husband.*

[from Ephesians 5]

Heavenly Father, we praise you for the gift of marriage, in which you unite a man and a woman as a team. As we study the first married couple, lead us to see your continued will for our marriages and make us eager to follow your will. Amen.

Introduction

Do you feel that you and your spouse were made for each other? Why or why not?

Part One: The Perfect Relationship

Read Genesis 2:18-25. Why did God say, “It is not good for the man to be alone”?

How did God’s assignment to Adam help Adam see his need for a “suitable helper”?

What do the details of Eve’s creation suggest to us about the relationship God planned for this first couple?

AGREE OR DISAGREE? Adam's knowledge that God had made Eve just for him increased his love and appreciation for his wife.

Who was the "head of the house" in Adam and Eve's family?

Did Eve's role as Adam's helper mean that she was inferior to Adam?

His Word in My Life

List three areas in which your spouse's gifts match a need that you have.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

A few weeks before her wedding, Lily was having lunch with a group of her friends. Julia asked about wedding vows: "You're not going to promise to submit to him, are you?"

"No," Lily replied, "I don't have to promise to submit to Carl. I want to."

Her friends were shocked. Marcy exclaimed, "Haven't you heard: we're liberated?"

If you had been Lily, how would you have responded?

Consider your personal relationship with Jesus. Does submitting to him diminish you?

How does Jesus' love for us help us understand how husbands are to love their wives?

Part Two: Still Made for Each Other

Read Genesis 3:1-7. Both Adam and Eve failed to fulfill their God-given roles. How did Eve overstep her role as helper and act as a leader over Adam?

What should Adam have done as a leader when he saw what Satan was doing?

Read Genesis 3:8-13. Give several specific examples of how sin destroyed Adam and Eve's perfect relationship with God.

How do Adam's words in verse 12 show that he no longer loved his wife as he once had?

Read Genesis 3:14-20. How do we know that God still wanted Adam to be Eve's leader?

What words in verse 16 indicate that neither Adam nor Eve would be able to perfectly fulfill their roles as leader and helper anymore?

His Word in My Life

List three specific things you could do to better fulfill your God-given role.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Lisette is a gifted woman. She sees what needs to be done and quickly sees to it that it gets done. Unfortunately, she oversteps her husband, George, in making important decisions. One day Lisette announces that she has enrolled their two daughters in a local private school.

"What?" George replies. "When did we decide this? What's wrong with the public school that they've been going to?"

"Well," Lisette responds, "I just didn't like the teachers that they were going to have next year. Besides, if I get a part-time job, I'll be able to cover the tuition without any problem."

How should George deal with Lisette's attitude?

Lesson Summary

Today many people see marriage as little more than a human custom. As such, they feel they are free to establish their own rules for it. Even when a man and a woman feel as if they are made for each other, they often consider marriage itself unnecessary. Instead of being "for as long as we both shall live," marriage has become "for as long as we both feel like it." Others consider God's roles for husbands and wives to be irrelevant and outdated. None of this changes God's will for marriage. He still wants one man and one woman to remain faithful to each other for as long as they both shall live. He wants the husband to be the loving leader and his wife to be his loving helper. And he wants both to find joy within these roles.

Lesson Two

Alone against the World

Noah and His Family

Worship

LEADER: If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—

ALL: Then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.

LEADER: For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;

ALL: They will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

[from Psalm 91]

O Most High, you are our refuge in this dangerous world. Send your angels to protect us. Let your powerful hand shield us so that no disaster may come near us. And, as we study your Word today, lead us to see that in you we will always find safety. Amen.

Introduction

Has a decision you have made, based on your beliefs and values, ever caused you to feel as though you have been ostracized?

Part One: Alone against a Violent and Unbelieving World

Read Genesis 6:1-7 and 11-13. What was the result of all the intermarriage between unbelievers and believers? (See verses 3 and 5.)

Was God justified in taking such drastic action as sending a flood? Explain.

Read Genesis 6:8-22 and Hebrews 11:7. **EVALUATE:** Noah and his family found favor in the eyes of the Lord because they were the only people strong enough to resist the unbelief and violence that surrounded them.

Put yourself in Noah's place. What difficulties will you have to face as you carry out the Lord's command?

How might you use the construction of the ark as a final, earnest act of mission work?

How does the statement in Hebrews 11:7 testify to the strength of Noah's faith?

His Word in My Life

List three difficult things that God calls us to do in this world. Explain how each item might present an opportunity to reach out to an unbelieving neighbor.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Ron is a freshman at a public university. He has discovered that his assigned roommate is gay. His professors speak of the Bible as a human creation filled with error and fantasy and ridicule anyone who takes it seriously. There is a lot of drinking; some of which is illegal. Many people in his dorm have their girlfriends "sleep over" in their rooms. By Thanksgiving Ron is very discouraged. He wants to fit in like anyone else, but he feels as though he is standing alone against the world in a thoroughly anti-Christian environment.

Imagine that, as one of Ron's parents, you want to use the story of Noah to encourage him. What kind of advice would you give your son?

What comfort and strength can these passages offer when we are standing alone against the world?

- John 15:18-21
- Matthew 10:17-20
- 2 Corinthians 4:8,9
- 1 Peter 4:12-16

- Matthew 5:10-12

- 2 Timothy 2:8-10

Part Two: Never Alone

If you were Noah, on the basis of these thoughts about the coming flood, what fears would you be experiencing?

How did God address every one of these fears for Noah and his family?

His Word in My Life

List your top three physical needs and your top three greatest fears.

NEEDS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

FEARS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How does each passage below assure you that God will always meet all your needs?

- Matthew 6:25-34

- Romans 8:32

- Hebrews 13:5
- Isaiah 43:1-3a
- Romans 8:15-17

Ross and Cindy have three young children. Ross works hard, but his income is barely enough to make ends meet. He keeps trying to look for a better job, but nothing has panned out yet. And it doesn't pay for Cindy to work, since much of her income would go toward paying for child care. One day, as Ross arrives home from work, both Ross and Cindy have bad news for each other. Ross tells Cindy that he's been laid off. And Cindy tells Ross that their rent has gone up, the transmission on their car has gone out, and because of their youngest son's unexpected doctor visit, they don't have enough money to pay the phone bill this month.

How might the story of Noah provide comfort and strength for Cindy and Ross?

Which of God's promises toward Noah and his family would you apply to yourself?

Lesson Summary

When we feel as if we are standing alone against the world—either because of persecution for our Christian faith or because of some other trial—we can remember that we are never alone. God is always with us, as he was always with Noah and his family. The best way to keep this truth in the forefront is to be constantly in God's Word. The more we study God's Word, the more we will see God's repeated promises never to leave us and always to provide for us. Those promises work powerfully in our hearts to strengthen our faith and prepare us for our times of trial. And the better we know them ourselves, the better prepared we will be to share them with others when they need to hear them.

Lesson Three

Blessed Is the Family That Puts God First

Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac

Worship

MEN: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart*

WOMEN: *And lean not on your own understanding;*

MEN: *In all your ways acknowledge him,*

WOMEN: *And he will make your paths straight.*

[from Proverbs 3]

Lord, you know all the days of our lives before any of them come to be. Help us always follow you with confidence and trust your loving guidance. Increase our love for you that we may always put you first in our lives. Amen.

Introduction

How would your family react if you suddenly won a million dollars?

Part One: Abraham's Trust in God's Promises

Read Genesis 15:1-6. What fears do you think Abram had?

Show that the Lord tailored his message to strengthen Abram's trust.

Reread Genesis 15:6. **EVALUATE:** Abram's trust in the Lord was nothing more than a trust that God would give him a son, just as he had promised.

Read Genesis 18:9-14. How was Sarah's reaction different from Abraham's reaction to the Lord's promise in Genesis chapter 15? Was her doubt justified? Explain.

Read Genesis 21:1-7. In what ways was the birth of Isaac a special blessing?

His Word in My Life

Read Romans 4:18-25. What are the similarities and differences between Abraham's faith and our faith? How does Abraham's example encourage you in your faith?

Your friends Todd and Cheryl have been trying for the last seven years to have a child. They have gone to many doctors and have tried various fertility treatments. Now they are becoming increasingly discouraged.

One evening over dinner your conversation turns to children. Cheryl becomes upset and starts to cry. "Why won't God give us a child?" she sobs. "Does he think we won't be good parents? What did we do wrong? Why is having a child so difficult for us and so easy for people who don't even want children?"

How might you use the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac to comfort and encourage you friends Todd and Cheryl, who remain childless?

How does each text below change our doubting laughter into trusting laughter?

- Matthew 7:7,8

- John 11:25,26

- Romans 8:28

- 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

- 1 Peter 4:12-14

- Revelation 22:20

Part Two: Abraham's Love for God

Read Genesis 22:1-19. How did this command challenge Abraham as a father? How did it test Abraham's hope for salvation?

List evidences of Abraham's great love for God in this account.

EVALUATE: Abraham could show complete love for God only by showing a lack of love for Isaac.

What blessings did Abraham receive through this ordeal?

His Word in My Life

Read Matthew 10:37. Could you do what Abraham did? Explain.

If you think you couldn't do what Abraham did, would that show a lack of love for God? Explain.

How can we grow in our love for God?

Your teenage son Ben has become good friends with a young Muslim in your neighborhood named Ibrahim. They often talk about religion, and Ben tells Ibrahim a lot about Christianity. Eventually, Ben asks Ibrahim if he would like to come to church with him. Ibrahim asks his parents, and they allow it. They feel that it would be good for Ibrahim to have this experience so that he can grow in his respect for Christians, who are "people of the book," just as Muslims consider themselves. As Ibrahim hears God's Word, the Holy Spirit works in his heart and brings him to faith in Jesus. Now Ibrahim no longer wants to be a Muslim; he wants to be baptized as a Christian.

When Ibrahim tells his parents about his desire to be baptized, they are furious. They forbid him to go to church with Ben again and command him to give up "this Christian foolishness."

How might you and Ben help Ibrahim in this situation?

Read Romans 12:1. Then, using the passages listed below, formulate a practical definition for what "offer[ing our] bodies as living sacrifices" means.

- 2 Corinthians 5:14,15

- 1 Corinthians 10:31

- Romans 12:3-8
- Philippians 2:1-4
- Galatians 5:13,14

Part Three: Abraham Feared God

Read Genesis 24:1-9. Why did Abraham insist that Isaac's wife be from among his own relatives?

How does each statement below show that Abraham feared God above all things?

Abraham was so serious about finding a believing wife for Isaac that he placed his servant under oath in this matter.

Abraham refused even to consider a Canaanite wife for Isaac.

Abraham refused to allow Isaac to go back to Haran, even if his prospective wife was unwilling to move to Canaan.

List the blessings that Abraham's family received because he feared God above all things.

His Word in My Life

List five qualities you want in your child's spouse. Discuss your choices.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

According to the following texts, what characteristics are important to God in the choosing of a mate?

- Proverbs 31:30

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- Galatians 5:22,23

- Ephesians 5:22,25

- 1 Peter 3:3,4

Lesson Summary

Blessed is the family that puts God first. Abraham's family certainly experienced this truth firsthand. To those who trust in him, God gives countless blessings. Such a family grows in faith by remaining close to God through his Word and sacraments. And the stronger our faith is, the more we will put God first in everything we think, say, and do.

Lesson Four

Salt That Lost Its Saltiness

Lot and His Family

Worship

LEADER: You are the salt of the earth.

ALL: But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?

WOMEN: *It is no longer good for anything,*

MEN: *Except to be thrown out and trampled by men.*

LEADER: You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before men,

ALL: That they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

[from Matthew 5]

Heavenly Father, we praise you for your gift of faith, through which you have made us salt and light for this world. Keep us ever salty and cause our faith to shine brightly so that through our words and actions, others may see and come to know you. Amen.

Introduction

How salty do you think you and your family are?

Part One: A Case of Poor Judgment

Read Genesis 13:5-13. What factors did Lot take into consideration as he looked for a place to move his household?

His Word in My Life

The company that you work for is reorganizing; your office will be closed. However, the company has offered you two other positions, each in a different city. Position 1 is the job that you have always wanted. It's the kind of position that you've been working toward throughout your career. The benefits package includes, among other things, a 20 percent pay increase. But that city is two hundred miles away from a church of your own denomination.

Joining a local congregation there would compromise your beliefs. Position 2 is the job that you did when you first entered the company. It lies well below your present skills level and pays an hourly wage that barely qualifies as a living. But it is located in a city that has a church of your own denomination.

What challenges will you face in either position? How might you overcome those challenges?

Your child is about to enter high school. You have the option of sending her to one of two public high schools in your city. High school 1 has a very conservative faculty. Its members' views on morality and sexuality agree with what God says in his Word. They teach abstinence in their sex education classes. And they have resisted efforts to start a Gay-Straight Alliance in their school. (A Gay-Straight Alliance is a group that promotes acceptance of homosexuality among the students of a school.) Unfortunately, students at this school consistently do very poorly on all their standardized tests.

High school 2 has an outstanding academic record. Its students consistently are among the top achievers in the state. Its faculty, though, is quite liberal in its views on morality and sexuality. The faculty members promote "safe sex" in their health classes. They distribute condoms and other methods of birth control through the school nurse's office. And they actively promote participation in the Gay-Straight Alliance.

What challenges will you face as you send your child to either school? How will you overcome these challenges?

How does each passage below reinforce the truth that spiritual matters are of the highest importance in our lives?

- Matthew 6:9-13

- Matthew 6:19-21

- Matthew 6:31-34

- 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Part Two: Infected by Immorality

Read Genesis 19:1-11. In 2 Peter 2:7, Peter says that Lot was “a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men.” What evidence do you see in Genesis chapter 19 that proves Peter’s statement?

How can you tell that constant, prolonged exposure to the immorality of Sodom had blunted Lot’s faith?

Read Genesis 19:12-26. When Lot went to warn his sons-in-law that the Lord was about to destroy Sodom, they thought he was joking. What does this tell us about Lot’s record of speaking out against the immorality of Sodom?

Read Genesis 19:30-38. How does Lot’s daughters’ plan for having children show the extent to which the immorality of Sodom had seared their consciences?

Lot’s older daughter named her son Moab, which means “from father.” Lot’s younger daughter named her son Ben-Ammi, which means “son of my people.” How do these two names show the complete lack of shame that Lot’s daughters felt over their sin of incest?

His Word in My Life

Read Ephesians 6:10-17. List the pieces of equipment that God has given us to protect us from Satan’s attacks. Describe what each does for us.

A television program that your children are watching has several main characters who are homosexual and a main theme of sex outside of marriage. You can see that your children don’t seem to be bothered by the immorality that they are seeing. In fact, they laugh openly at many jokes that you find disgusting.

How will you handle a situation in which your children are not bothered by a television program that features the gay lifestyle and extramarital sex?

At the dinner table, your 17-year-old daughter announces that her best friend, Tara, has just come out as a homosexual. You drop your fork in shock, unable to believe what your daughter is saying. Tara regularly comes to your house; she seems like such a fine young woman.

What advice will you give to your daughter?

Lesson Summary

Jesus said to his followers, “You are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). One purpose God has for putting us here is to keep our world from going completely putrid and corrupt in sin. So, how salty are you and the other members of your family? Are you working to preserve the earth and to keep it from going completely bad? Or have you lost some of your saltiness? Take some time to honestly evaluate yourself. See if you are able to identify an area of your life where you have not been as salty as you should, or could, be. Ask the Lord to forgive you for your failures. Then, with the strength God gives in his Word and sacraments, work to regain your saltiness in that area of your life. With God’s help, you will be as salty as he wants you to be.

Lesson Five

Rivalry and Reconciliation

Jacob and His Family

Worship

Sing or read together.

Love is the gracious gift of your goodness;
Love is the patient fruit of your care;
Love is the gentle work of your Spirit,
Who is the source of love ev'rywhere.

Love means forgiveness, patience, and kindness;
Love is not jealous, boastful, or rude.
Love endures all things, bearing, believing;
Love hopes forever, rejoices in truth.

Love among Christians, love in the fam'ly,
Love for the Savior, whose blood was shed,
Love and submission, one to another
As unto Christ, who reigns as our head.

[from Christian Worship, hymn 505, ©1985 Donald E. Smith]

Heavenly Father, you loved us first, demonstrating your love for us by sacrificing your only Son on the cross in our place. Lead us to reflect your love in our relationships with the other members of our family. Enable us to forgive, just as in Christ you have forgiven us. Amen.

Introduction

What are some of the most common causes for friction and conflict within families?

Part One: A Hateful Rivalry

Read Genesis 37:2-11. In what way(s) did each of the following parties contribute to the hateful rivalry that existed between Joseph and his brothers?

- Jacob

- Joseph
- Joseph's brothers

Read Genesis 37:12-36. Then read James 1:14,15. How do the actions of Joseph's brothers demonstrate the truth of James' statement?

Reuben suggested that they throw Joseph in a cistern. And Judah suggested that they sell him as a slave. Did these two brothers do the right thing?

EVALUATE: When the brothers sold Joseph as a slave, they showed a callous lack of love for their father.

His Word in My Life

Your two daughters, Tiffany and Briana, couldn't be more different. Tiffany is the consummate achiever. Her report cards show straight As. Her teachers have always loved her. She is cheerful, obedient, polite, and agreeable. Briana, on the other hand, is a challenge. Stubborn, sullen, and unmotivated, she hates homework and has never gotten along with her teachers. Few people enjoy being around her because her attitude is so negative.

After you have praised Tiffany for yet another job well done on her most recent report card, Briana crosses her arms and shouts, "Tiffany, Tiffany, Tiffany! All I ever hear about is Tiffany! I know that she's your favorite! So why don't you just say it? You love Tiffany more than you love me!"

How would you respond to Briana's accusation that Tiffany is your favorite daughter?

You are the oldest of five brothers. The oldest four brothers have gotten together at your house to plan your annual "all brothers' fishing trip." However, your youngest brother, Dennis, couldn't make it. He had to work. As the four of you discuss your plans for your trip, one of your brothers says, "Do we really have to invite Dennis again this year? Can't we just tell him that we decided not to go?"

"Why wouldn't you want Dennis to come along?" you ask.

"I'm sick of him always showing us up," your brother replies. "He always talks about what a great job he has and the great house he has and the last great trip he was able to take with his family. I can't stand having him around. He always makes the rest of us look bad."

Another brother agrees, "He's been doing that ever since we were kids. Did you ever hear Mom or Dad say anything bad about him?"

“All in favor of going fishing this year without Dennis say, ‘Aye,’” adds a third brother.

“Aye,” say three voices in unison.

Then your brothers turn to you, saying, “Okay, how do you vote?”

What would you say if three of your siblings resent a fourth brother for his pompous behavior and make plans to eliminate him from a brothers’ annual fishing trip?

What help does each of the following passages offer to overcome bitterness and hateful feelings that arise in your heart?

- Galatians 5:19-26

- Ephesians 4:30–5:2

- 1 John 2:9-11

- 1 John 3:11-18

Part Two: The Power of Forgiveness

Read Genesis 42:18-24. Joseph must have known that demanding that his brothers bring Benjamin to Egypt would cause his father great heartache. Why, then, did Joseph make this demand?

Give evidence that Joseph’s test was already having the desired effect on his brothers.

Read Genesis 43:8-10. Compare the way Judah acted toward Benjamin (and Jacob) here with the way he had acted toward Joseph (and Jacob) 20 years earlier.

Read Genesis 43:32-34. **EVALUATE:** If this banquet had happened 20 years earlier and Joseph had received five times as much food as anyone else, the brothers would have behaved differently.

Read Genesis 44:18-34. **EVALUATE:** Judah’s motive in pleading for Benjamin was his desire to save himself from his father’s anger.

Read Genesis 45:1-15. How do we know that Joseph forgave his brothers and harbored no ill will toward them?

His Word in My Life

What does each text below teach us about God's forgiveness and forgiving other people?

- Matthew 18:21-27
- Luke 15:20b-24
- Jeremiah 31:34
- Romans 5:6-8
- Colossians 3:12-14

“Stop it!” your oldest child, Charlie, screams at the top of his lungs as he races into his room and slams the door. “Great!” you think to yourself. “Sam is tormenting Charlie again.” You walk into the hallway to see what’s happening. And, sure enough, there’s Sam, your youngest child, tapping on Charlie’s door and making all sorts of annoying noises. You can tell from the huge grin on Sam’s face that he knows that he’s bothering his brother. He is enjoying it too much to care.

So you walk over to Charlie’s door, grab Sam’s hands, and then walk into Charlie’s room. “We need to talk,” you announce to both of them. “Charlie, tell me what happened.”

“I was trying to read,” Charlie replied, “and Sam kept making these annoying noises. I asked him to stop, and he wouldn’t. So I ran into my room so that I could be alone.”

“Now, Sam,” you say, “you know that those noises bother your brother. If you want to make noises, go somewhere by yourself and make noises. Don’t purposely bother your brother. Now what do you say to Charlie?”

Sheepishly, Sam looks at Charlie and says, “I’m sorry.” Then they both walk away and go back to playing separately.

“Whew! I’m glad that’s over,” you say to yourself as you return to the sofa.

What is missing from the conversation you had with Sam and Charlie?

Your friend Rhonda has been feuding with her sister Ruth as long as you've known her. It may have started over something little, but for years neither sister has talked to the other. Then one day Rhonda calls to tell you, "Ruth just called. She said that she has forgiven me for all the years that we've been fighting. She didn't give me a reason for her sudden change of heart. She just said, 'I can't go on like this anymore. I forgive you, and I hope that you can forgive me.' But I don't know whether I can forgive her. All the mean things she has done to me over the years have really left a scar. How can I forget all those past hurts and act as if they never happened?"

How might you use the story of Joseph and his brothers to encourage Rhonda to forgive her sister?

Lesson Summary

The only way we can bring love and forgiveness into our families is by growing in our appreciation for God's love and forgiveness toward us. The more we see how God, in Christ, has loved and forgiven us, the more we will want and be able to love and forgive others when they sin against us.

Lesson Six

Train a Child

The Families of Hannah and Eli

Worship

WOMEN: *My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad;*

MEN: *My inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right.*

WOMEN: *Listen to your father, who gave you life,*

MEN: *And do not despise your mother when she is old.*

WOMEN: *Buy the truth and do not sell it;*

MEN: *Get wisdom, discipline and understanding.*

ALL: *May your father and mother be glad;*

WOMEN: *May she who gave you birth rejoice!*

MEN: *He who has a wise son delights in him.*

[from Proverbs 23]

Heavenly Father, in your love you discipline us for our good. Help us also discipline our children for their good so that they may remain close to you all the days of their lives. Amen.

Introduction

How can we account for such a wide range of differences in the contributions that the members of one family make to society while another family seemingly makes little or no contributions?

How would you assess your effectiveness in “train[ing] a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6)?

Part One: Eli’s Parental Failures

Read 1 Samuel 2:12-17 for a description of the sins in which the priests of that day were caught up. (NOTE: Leviticus 3:14-17 and 7:34 can also help us understand what was

going on and why it was wrong.) **EVALUATE: The actions of Hophni and Phinehas did not anger God as much as the attitude that lay behind their actions.**

Read 1 Samuel 2:22-25. Which statement best characterizes Eli's rebuke of his sons?

- A. Eli's rebuke was appropriately stern and should have had more of an effect on his sons.
- B. Eli's rebuke was pitifully weak. He would have done better not saying anything at all.
- C. Eli's rebuke was a case of doing too little too late.

AGREE OR DISAGREE? We dare not be too harsh in evaluating Eli's discipline. He did rebuke his sons as much as he could. It's not his fault that his sons refused to listen.

Read Proverbs 19:18. How does the account of Eli and his sons illustrate this truth?

His Word in My Life

In the light of these texts, discuss the messages that come from godly discipline and the blessings that result from it.

- Proverbs 13:24

- Proverbs 22:15

- Proverbs 23:13,14

- Proverbs 29:15,17

- Hebrews 12:5-11

Your neighbor has always been indulgent toward his two children. Throughout their lives, he has given them whatever they have wanted and has let them do whatever they have wished. Now they are in high school. And they are incorrigible. They show no respect for their classmates or their teachers. They put no effort into their homework. They are constantly in trouble and have been arrested several times. Your neighbor has expressed his concern to you regarding his children's behavior. "What can I do with my two children?" he asks.

What advice would you give to a neighbor who is concerned about the behavior of his two high school–aged children?

Gordon and Rose worked very hard to raise their children to know Jesus as their Savior. They took them to church, taught them Bible stories from infancy on, had home devotions every night, and had them attending Sunday school regularly. But when their son Josh entered college, he began to fall away from God. He stopped going to church and began questioning the truths of the Bible. Eventually, he came to believe that God really didn't exist, and if God did, he did a very poor job of running the world. All of this hurt Gordon and Rose deeply, and they began to wonder if they were responsible for Josh's failure to stay close to God.

What would you say to Rose and Gordon about their son's apostasy?

Part Two: How Hannah Trained Samuel

Read 1 Samuel 1:21-28. Why might Hannah have had misgivings about taking Samuel to live at the tabernacle? (Hint: Consider the people with whom he would be living.)

What do these verses say about the training she would give Samuel during the few years she had him at home?

If you were Hannah, what would you have done to train Samuel to know the Lord?

Read 1 Samuel 2:18-21,26. **AGREE OR DISAGREE? Hannah was still able to train Samuel even when he was no longer living with her.**

The Bible tells us, "And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men" (1 Samuel 2:26). How similar that is to what would one day be written about Jesus in Luke 2:52: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." What does this comparison tell us about Samuel's character?

EVALUATE: It's never too early to train a child to know the Lord.

His Word in My Life

Make a list of the things you are doing (or you have done) to train your children to know the Lord. Discuss your list with other parents.

Jay and Gwen are a young couple in your congregation who have recently had their first child. Neither Jay nor Gwen grew up in a Christian household. They don't have any experiences to draw from as they seek to train their child to know the Lord. They, however, want to do the best that they can and have come to you for advice.

What advice would you give Jay and Gwen on how they can train their child to know the Lord?

What insights into the training of children does each text give you?

- Deuteronomy 6:6-9

- Ephesians 5:19,20

- 2 Timothy 3:14-17

- Hebrews 10:25

- Romans 6:1-4

Lesson Summary

The contrast between Hannah's family and Eli's family illustrates the importance of training children in the way they should go so that when they are old, they will not turn away from it. That means we will do everything possible, as parents, to make sure that our children are growing in faith. Discipline children using the law to point out sin and to point out the child's need for a Savior and using the gospel to motivate with God's loving forgiveness. Have regular devotions. Pray and worship together. Remember your baptism. Use God's means of grace—his gospel in Word and sacraments—to strengthen your family so that you all follow Jesus together.

Don't take the blessings that come from Christian parenting for granted. Continue to rely on God's Word and sacraments for the strength you need to be an effective parent.

Lesson Seven

Fallen, Yet Forgiven

David's Sin and Its Consequences for His Family

Worship

WOMEN: *Create in me a pure heart, O God,*

MEN: *And renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

WOMEN: *Do not cast me from your presence*

MEN: *Or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

WOMEN: *Restore to me the joy of your salvation*

MEN: *And grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

[from Psalm 51]

O Lord, against you, you only, have we sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Wash away our sins in the blood of your Son, and fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we may always think, say, and do only what is good and right in your sight. Amen.

Introduction

Why is personal and sincere communication such an important component of the healing process when relationships have been damaged by sin?

Part One: David's Sin

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5. What do the last words of verse 1 seem to suggest about David's attitude at this time?

EVALUATE: Bathsheba bore less responsibility for the affair with David.

Read 2 Samuel 11:6-17,26,27. AGREE or DISAGREE? Since the law prescribed the death penalty for those guilty of adultery, David had no choice but to cover up his sin.

List all the commandments that David broke during this episode in his life.

EVALUATE: The worst consequence of David's sin was the breakdown of his relationship with God.

Read Psalm 32:3,4, which describes what David was going through as he refused to repent of his sin. **AGREE OR DISAGREE?** It is possible for guilt to make a person physically sick.

If David had died during this time of impenitence, what would have happened to him?

His Word in My Life

Sherry's husband, Martin, travels a lot. When he is home, he and Sherry try to spend as much time together as they can. But Sherry still gets very lonely when Martin is gone. Over time, however, Sherry has become very good friends with Larry, their neighbor. They begin to spend a lot of time with each other. You are Sherry's closest friend, and the time she spends with Larry really concerns you. You call her and talk. "Oh, come on," she says, "My relationship with Larry is purely as friends. There's nothing improper about it. I still love Martin and will always love Martin. I'd never cheat on him—least of all with Larry."

What approach would you take to address your concern over the amount of time that Sherry spends with her next-door neighbor?

Quentin and Angie have been married for almost 25 years. For most of that time, they have been completely faithful and devoted to one another. But during the first years of their marriage, Quentin had an affair with a woman he met at work. The affair lasted a few weeks and ended more than two decades ago. Quentin never told Angie about the affair. Now, however, as Quentin and Angie prepare to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary, Quentin's conscience is bothering him. He feels as if this secret is crushing him and driving a wedge between him and Angie. Yet he is afraid to tell Angie because he fears what this revelation might do to their marriage.

Should Quentin tell Angie about his affair or leave this secret buried and try his best to forget about it?

Part Two: Forgiveness and Consequences

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-7a,13,14. What was Nathan's strategy for confronting David with his sin?

AGREE OR DISAGREE? God was too easy on David when he forgave David's sin immediately after David confessed.

Which consequences did God remove? Which consequences did he not remove?

Read 2 Samuel 12:15-23. It is easy to understand why David fasted and prayed while his sick son was still alive. Explain David's behavior after the child died.

Support this statement with evidence from these verses: **Although David still suffered some of the consequences of his sin, his relationship with God was restored.**

Read 2 Samuel 12:10-12. This judgment from God was fulfilled during Absalom's rebellion. (Also see 2 Samuel 16:20-22.) Was it fair of God to allow such serious consequences of David's sin to remain even after he had fully forgiven David's sin? Explain.

His Word in My Life

You hear a knock at your door. When you open it, your friend Mike is standing there, crying. "I need to talk," he says. "I just found out that Sonya has been cheating on me. It's been going on for a few months. I had my suspicions, but I never had any evidence. Tonight I confronted her, and she confessed. She explained that the affair was over and begged for my forgiveness. I was so angry that I couldn't do anything but walk out. I can't believe she hurt me like this. What am I supposed to do now?"

What kind of advice will you give to your friend Mike after he has explained his wife's unfaithfulness?

Isn't it unfair for Mike to have to suffer the consequences for Sonya's sins?

How do the following texts help us accept the Lord's discipline without complaining?

- Romans 8:1

- Romans 5:1,9,10

- Romans 6:23
- 1 Peter 3:21
- Romans 13:1-5
- Luke 23:39-43
- Romans 5:3-5
- Hebrews 12:4-11

Lesson Summary

Carla Fay Tucker brutally murdered two people with a pickax. Following her conviction, the state of Texas sentenced her to die by lethal injection. While she was in prison, God worked faith in her heart. She spent her time on death row telling inmates about Jesus. Many people, including Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Pope John Paul II, pleaded with then-Governor George W. Bush to stop her execution. They argued that since she had come to faith in Jesus, she was a new person. She deserved mercy now, not execution. Governor Bush, however, refused to stop her execution. And Carla Fay Tucker died by lethal injection for her crimes. From everything we can tell, she now is at home with her Lord. The consequences of her sin were completely removed.

In a time of weakness, King David committed a whole series of sins. After a year or more of David's stubborn denial, God reached out to him with the truth of his law to convict David of his sins. A repentant David understood that God had completely forgiven all his sins. Yet he and the other members of his family were still required to endure some of the painful consequences of his sins as a constant reminder of God's faithfulness and love.

We too need to always remember that in Christ all of our sins are completely removed. Even when we must suffer some consequences for our sins, we still stand forgiven before God. This forgiveness helps us deal with the consequences of our sins and keeps our focus on the heaven that Christ has prepared for us. There all of our sins—and all of their consequences—will forever be abolished, never to bother us again.

Lesson Eight

Holding On While Letting Go

Mary's Relationship with Her Son Jesus

Worship

Lord of the home, the Son you love
Received a mother's tender care,
A father's strength like yours above,
A home with warmth and kindness there.

Teach us to keep our homes so fair
That, were our Lord a child once more,
He might be glad our hearth to share
And find a welcome at our door.

Lord, may your Spirit sanctify
Each household duty we fulfill.
May we our Savior glorify
With glad obedience to your will. Amen.

[from Christian Worship, hymn 502, ©Albert F. Bayly, Oxford University Press]

Introduction

Share a “letting go” experience from your own life.

Part One: Learning to Let Go

Read Luke 2:41-52. Why do you think Mary felt justified in rebuking Jesus for his behavior?

The New King James Version of the Bible translates Jesus' response to Mary in this way: “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be *about My Father's business?*” (Luke 2:49). How does this translation help us understand what Jesus was trying to teach his mother about his mission in life?

Read John 2:1-11. **AGREE OR DISAGREE? Mary was out of line when she went to Jesus and implied that he should do something about the wedding couple's wine shortage.**

Which of the following do you think best reflects what Jesus said to Mary in John 2:4?

- A. "Quit bugging me, woman! You have no right to tell me what to do!"
- B. "Woman, this matter is not your concern. I will decide when and how I will help."
- C. "Woman, why are you asking me for help? I can't do anything to fix this problem."

Read Mark 3:20-35. At times it must have been exciting for Mary to see her son heal the sick, cast out demons, or hear him preach and teach. But at other times, Jesus' work must have caused Mary great concern. In this text, Jesus was exhausted. The crowds, however, were so large and demanding that they would not permit him to get the rest he needed. His family members came to the conclusion that he was incapable of making a decision on his own to remove himself from that situation. Evaluate their actions.

AGREE OR DISAGREE? Jesus' words in Mark 3:33-35 show that he no longer had any regard for his biological family.

Read John 19:25-27. How did Jesus' final provision for the care of his mother enable Mary to let go of her son without fear?

His Word in My Life

Read the following passages and discuss what guidance or encouragement God gives you for letting go of your children as they go out on their own.

- Genesis 2:24

- Proverbs 22:6

- Proverbs 1:8,9; 13:1; 15:5

- 1 Timothy 5:4

Aaron and Patricia are newlyweds. Riley and Doris are Aaron's parents. Aaron and Patricia don't have enough money to rent an apartment, so Riley and Doris have agreed to let them live rent-free in an apartment on the second floor of their house. This arrangement presents some challenges. Doris is a very traditional woman. She always prepares elaborate meals for her family and keeps her house immaculate. Aaron and Patricia, however, have different priorities. Neither of them likes to cook. They eat a lot of frozen food and carry out. They also prefer to spend time biking with each other rather than cleaning their apartment. These different priorities are hard for Doris to understand. She regularly makes double batches of her meals and brings dinner up to Aaron and Patricia's apartment. And at least once a week, Aaron and Patricia return from work to find Doris busily cleaning their apartment. Aaron and Patricia sincerely appreciate her well-intentioned help. But for the sake of their marriage and their relationship with Riley and Doris, they need Doris to back off and leave them alone.

If you had the opportunity to talk to Riley and Doris about their situation, what would you say?

What advice would you give to Aaron and Patricia?

Part Two: Mary Held On to Her Savior

Reread Luke 2:41-52, focusing especially on verses 50 and 51. Mary did not understand what Jesus had just told her and Joseph. Yet Luke tells us that she “treasured all these things in her heart” (verse 51). How does this show Mary's determination to maintain a healthy relationship with Jesus?

Reread John 2:1-11, focusing especially on verses 3-5. Give evidence from these verses that Mary continued to hold on to Jesus in a very proper way.

Reread John 19:25-27. Which of the following do you think best explains why Jesus addressed Mary as “woman” instead of “mother”?

- A. Jesus was being crucified at the time. He was in too much pain to worry about showing tenderness toward his mother.
- B. Jesus knew that Mary could no longer hold on to him as her son. Therefore, he again emphasized how important it was for Mary to let go of him by addressing her as “woman.”
- C. Jesus' final provision for his mother was more than just the act of a loving son. It was part of his perfect obedience to God's law and, therefore, part of his work as our Savior.

Read Acts 1:12-14. This is the last mention of Mary in the Bible. Why is it a fitting conclusion to the Bible's account of Mary's relationship with Jesus?

His Word in My Life

Grandparents often play an important role in the Christian training of their grandchildren. Compile a list of things that grandparents can do to encourage the faith of their children and grandchildren.

You are a new grandparent. Your daughter has just given birth to her first child. You can barely contain your excitement as you hold your new grandson for the first time. Unfortunately, your excitement soon is dampened when you find out that your daughter has no plans to baptize her baby. Her husband, Rex, is a strict Baptist. According to him, Baptism does not create faith or give the forgiveness of sins. In his view, God doesn't hold children accountable for their sins until they can actually understand what they are doing. He says that none of their children will be baptized until they can make their own personal commitments to Christ. You know the blessings that Baptism gives and how much your grandson needs those blessings. You talk to your daughter about this privately, and you find out that she too would like to have her son baptized. Rex, however, is dead set against it. To maintain peace at home, she has agreed not to have their son baptized until he is older.

What would you say or do if Rex would continue to refuse to have your new grandson baptized?

Read the following texts. Then discuss how each passage encourages you in your parenting or grandparenting responsibility.

- Psalm 23:6

- Isaiah 41:10

- John 15:5-8

- 2 Corinthians 5:1-9

- 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Lesson Summary

Letting go and holding on seem to be mutually exclusive activities. However, when it comes to our relationships with our grown children, they are not. As our children go out on their own, it is necessary that we let go of them and let them live their lives. But this does not mean that we will have no further relationships with them. Far from it. Throughout our lives, we will work to maintain good relationships with our children by holding on to our relationship with Jesus. And we will encourage our children and grandchildren to do the same.