

19-Minute Bible Studies
on
Families Under God

A Bible Study Course for Adults

by

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Leader's Guide

Set One—Families of God	3
Lesson One—Foster an Attitude of Repentance and Forgiveness	3
Lesson Two—Practice Love	5
Lesson Three—Create a Family Altar	7
Lesson Four—Lead From Discontent to Gratitude	10
Lesson Five—Build Up, and Don't Tear Down	13
Set Two—Blessed Is the Man Whose Quiver Is Full	15
Lesson One—Children Are a Blessing	15
Lesson Two—Parents Must Deal With Their Children's Sinfulness	18
Lesson Three—Celebrating Our Unity and Our Differences	21
Lesson Four—Help Children Deal With Others in a God-Pleasing Way	24
Lesson Five—Speak to Each Other in Love	27
Set Three—Together We Stand	30
Lesson One—Parents Are Children Too—Children of God	30
Lesson Two—Dealing With Fear	32
Lesson Three—Serve the Lord as a Husband or as a Wife	35
Lesson Four—Be Patient With Members of Your Family	37
Lesson Five—Take a Stand Against Materialism	39
Set Four—Priests in the Home	41
Lesson One—Presenting God to Your Children	41
Lesson Two—Recognize the Pitfalls That Hinder Spiritual Growth	44
Lesson Three—Raising Godly Children in a Godless Society	47
Lesson Four—Discipline in Love	50
Lesson Five—Approaching God's Throne Together	52
Set Five—Lessons for Men's Groups	55
Lesson One—Leaders Are Always Growing Closer to Christ	55
Lesson Two—Building a God-Pleasing Home Life	57
Lesson Three—Be a Counselor in Your Home	59
Lesson Four—Be a Model Your Family Looks Up To	61
Lesson Five—Be the Captain of Your Household	63
Set Six—Lessons for Women's Groups	65
Lesson One—Blessed to Be a Woman	65
Lesson Two—Pursuing True Beauty	67
Lesson Three—Worth More Than Rubies	69
Lesson Four—Making the Home a Haven	72
Lesson Five—The Super Parent	75

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Set One—Families of God

Lesson One

Foster an Attitude of Repentance and Forgiveness

Introduction

The family setting is a place of many exciting firsts—a toddler's first step, the first intelligible word, the first tooth. Sadly, because of sin, the home is also where we first experience personal conflict. In the latter chapters of Genesis we read about the family of a man named Jacob. Envy and jealousy led 10 of Jacob's sons to treat their brother Joseph with great cruelty, even to the point of selling him into slavery. As the narrative continues, we learn how years later these same brothers repented and asked Joseph to forgive them.

Scripture

“They [Joseph's brothers] said to one another, ‘Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us.’” (Genesis 42:21).

“When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?’ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father left these instructions before he died: “This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.” Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.’ When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

“His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. ‘We are your slaves,’ they said.

“But Joseph said to them, ‘Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them” (Genesis 50:15-21).

Study

1. What evidence can you find to suggest that the brothers were sorry for what they had done to Joseph many years earlier?

The brothers agreed that they were callous and cold hearted when they ignored Joseph's cries for compassion and sold him into slavery.

2. What role did the consciences of these brothers play in leading them to repent? How can parents make sure that their child's conscience will remain sharp enough to prick him or her when he or she is guilty of wrongdoing?

Joseph's brothers felt the sharp sting of guilt for selling their brother into slavery. Joseph's forgiveness was good news to their hurting consciences. Parents can help sharpen their child's conscience by regularly teaching God's Law, the Ten Commandments.

3. What conclusions about Joseph's attitude can we draw from these words: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?" (See also Matthew 7:1,2.)

See Genesis 44:33,34 and 45:1,2. Joseph truly loved his brothers. He did not want them to be afraid that he would take revenge. He left everything in God's hands. Joseph had neither the wisdom nor the authority to chasten his brothers for what they had done to him. Any discipline that might have come their way would have come from God's hand, not from Joseph's.

4. Evaluate the following statement: "When we forgive, we must also forget the offense and move on."

If we keep a running tally of another person's offenses, we are really keeping the memory of the person's sin alive. Jeremiah 31:33,34 describes God's relationship with his people. He will "forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." God wants us to forgive the sins of others in the same way, by forgetting their offenses.

5. Read Matthew 6:12. Is the forgiveness that God continues to offer us based on any conditions that we have to fulfill? What implication does the answer to that question have for the way we are to forgive those who have wronged us?

God forgives us unconditionally. He wants us to forgive others in the same way.

6. Evaluate: "The two most important sentences we can teach our children to say are, 'I'm sorry,' and 'You're forgiven.'"

The exact wording doesn't matter as much as the Bible's teachings of *repentance* and *forgiveness*. As baptized children of God, our children understand these truths, but they need to have them reinforced and be encouraged to practice them daily.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, with the unconditional and undeserved forgiveness that you daily offer us for Jesus' sake, move us to forgive and forget the wrongs that others commit against us. And help us teach our children to forgive others, even as God has forgiven them. Amen.



Set One—Families of God

Lesson Two

Practice Love

Introduction

In a God-fearing home, family members love one another. But what does that mean? How does such love look? How do people show their love for one another? Scripture speaks often about godly love. In 1 Corinthians chapter 13 the apostle Paul eloquently captures the essence of godly love. He describes it as one would describe an action. And he also tells what love is not.

Scripture

“Now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

Study

1. Paul uses the Greek word *agape* for love throughout this chapter. Agape love is the selfless love that God has shown to us—the love described in John 3:16. Such love is never based on merit, nor is it conditional (“If you do this, then I will love you”). How does the use of this word color the whole meaning of this entire chapter?