



FAMILY TIES BIBLE STUDY

Family...we've all got one. We are a part of one and it is a part of us. Whether we like it or not, our family is our people. We are knit together by the closest of ties.

Family is a gift of God. These foundational relationships have been established by God, and he created family to be a blessing to those who are a part of it.

There are two goals for these studies.

First, you'll learn about the family more generally from the Creator of the family as you listen to what his Word has to say about family.

Second, you'll learn more about your own family specifically as you listen to one another talk about who you are as a family.

This series of three studies is intended to be used together by parents and children. You'll notice there are questions for parents, questions for kids, and questions for all. Share your responses together and see how the Lord leads you as you discuss.

At the outset, let me acknowledge two important pieces.

First, this may be new or even a bit awkward for you. That's okay. (Quite honestly, I would have been extremely nervous to try something like this with my parents when I was in high school.) Conversations like these around God's Word are worth having, though. Give it a shot and see how the Lord chooses to work through his Word.

Second, not every family includes a married couple and multiple children. There are plenty of assumptions made about family structures built into these studies. Please feel free to adapt language and discussions to meet how your family has come together. This might even give a chance to discuss how sin and grace have impacted families.

May the Lord who brought you together by his wisdom bless you as you open the Scriptures!

SESSION ONE: MAN AND WOMAN

OPENING DISCUSSION

Some of the most fascinating stories in the world are origin stories. Superheroes, for example, always have some of the most fascinating origin stories. It's important to know the backstory – how they got to be who they are and where they are. Without an origin story, much of what comes later just doesn't make as much sense.

Each family has an origin story too. Maybe you've never heard your family's story before. Even if you have, this is an opportunity to hear it again. If you are doing this with multiple families together, it can be fun to hear each other's stories.

Parents, tell the group the story of how you met. Feel free to include stories of engagements, weddings, big moves, or any other significant events that led your family to where it is today too. This is a great time to share photos and the ups and downs of dating and marriage.

Questions for Kids:

1. *What had you heard before? What hadn't you heard?*
2. *What have you learned about your parents?*

STUDY

God's Word also tells us a family origin story. It's this story that helps us make sense of what it means to be family.

Read Genesis 2:4-9

Questions for ALL:

1. *How did God make the man? He formed him from the dust.*
2. *What did God do to make him a "living creature?" (v.7) He breathed in his nostrils the breath of life.*

Read Genesis 2:15-17

Questions for ALL:

1. *What jobs did God give the man? To work and keep the garden.*
2. *What commands did God give the man? "You may eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat."*

Read Genesis 2:18-25

Questions for ALL:

1. *What is "not good" according to God in verse 18? That the man should be alone.*
2. *How does God make the woman? He takes a rib from the man and makes it into a woman.*
3. *Who is ultimately the creator of the family? God is.*

This is the creation of the first family. It is the first ever meeting between a man and a woman. It's fascinating to see how God has created us for community. None of us is intended to go it alone. In fact, God even says that it's not good for us to be alone. You can sense the joy in Adam's voice as he exclaims, "This AT LAST is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." You can also sense the perfection as the man and the woman exist together in an environment where there is no shame. The relationship works the way it is supposed to. This was God's original design for relationships between man and woman and for relationships within a family structure.

Questions for Parents:

1. *What has it meant for you to leave your father and mother and hold fast to a spouse?*
2. *What does it look like for you and your spouse when you're at your best?*

Questions for Kids:

1. *What do you think it looks like when your parents' relationship is at its best?*

As you keep reading in Genesis, you find that the perfection of the relationship between man and woman gets seriously damaged. Consequently, the relationship no longer works exactly as God designed it to work, and neither do the rest of the family's relationships.

Read Genesis 3:1-7

Questions for All:

1. *What does the serpent say to the woman to lead her astray? "Did God actually say..." (v1). "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (v4-5).*
2. *When the eyes of the man and woman are opened in v7, what change do they notice and what to they do to fix the change? They see that they are naked and they make loincloths to hide their shame.*

Read Genesis 3:8-13

Questions for ALL:

1. *Not only are the man and woman hiding from each other, who else are they hiding from? God*
2. *Who does the man blame for disobeying the command about eating? The woman.*
3. *Who does the woman blame? The serpent*

The doubt and disobedience of the man and woman brought the brokenness of sin into the world. As a result, all relationships between human beings have fallen under this umbrella of sinful brokenness. Man and woman no longer work together perfectly the way they were intended. Relationships that had been pure and transparent are now characterized by guilt, shame, and blame. This same sinful brokenness plagues families today.

Question for Parents:

1. *How have you experienced the brokenness of sin in your relationship with your spouse?*

Question for Kids:

2. *How have you experienced the brokenness of sin in your relationship with your parents and siblings?*

Question for Parents:

3. *How have you experienced the brokenness of sin in your relationship with your kids?*

Recognizing the brokenness in the world and even within our own families, we can return to the Scriptures to find in them promises from God to renew and restore the foundational relationships between humanity and God as well as between man and woman. He restores and renews all of creation through his Son, Jesus.

What's particularly fascinating is that, more than once, the imagery used for Jesus and his people is that of a bride and groom. It's in the context of a marriage that we see more clearly the depth of Jesus' loving work of salvation. The restoration of humanity and God looks like a marriage between Christ and the church.

Read Ephesians 5:25-27

Question for ALL:

1. *What does the love of Christ for the church look like? It looks like sacrifice. He gave himself for her. He also sanctified/make her holy, washed her, presented her to himself.*

The Bible also tells us that someday, the church, the bride of Christ, will be united with Jesus, the bridegroom where they will celebrate a never-ending marriage feast in Christ's eternal kingdom. Read the next two passages to get a sense for what that looks like.

Read Revelation 19:6-9 and 21:1-4

There will be a day when all that has been broken by sin will be mended. All the imperfection will be washed away, and we will be clothed with the pure white robes won by Jesus' death and resurrection. Relationships will work the way God intended and there will be peace in the whole household of God. Sin will be washed away and all will be perfect as God intended them to be.

APPLICATION

Until that day, though, we continue to live in this broken world, but we do so as people renewed by Jesus and called by him to live in anticipation of that final day. Foundational relationships between man and woman in marriage take on new meaning in Christ.

As a family, the relationship between a husband and wife are critical and the relationship doesn't impact them alone. A marriage relationship needs the support of not just the parents, but of the children, extended family and friends.

Read Ephesians 5:22-33

Questions for ALL:

1. *What does the relationship between a husband and wife mirror? [The relationship between Christ and the church.](#)*
2. *What parts do wives and husbands play in this kind of relationship (see esp. v33)? [Wives respect their husbands. Husbands love their wives.](#)*

Question for Parents:

1. *What does it look like for you to respect and love each other well?*

Questions for Kids:

1. *How can you support your parents' relationship?*
2. *How can you pray for your parents? If you need help, ask your parents what to pray for.*

Consider taking the time here to consider what kinds of things help you to feel loved. You can look at the 5 Love Languages by Gary Chapman to start if that helps. There is even an online quiz. These types of material can be helpful in thinking about how we love one another well in Jesus' name.

CLOSING

Your family began as one relationship – the relationship between your mom and dad. This relationship continues to be part of the foundation for the entire family. When this relationship flourishes, every other relationship in the family can be strengthened. We'll dig into other family relationships in future studies.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank and praise you for the gift of family. Thank you for your wisdom to create man and woman. Through them, you give life to the world. Bless all husbands and wives that their love might be a picture of the kind of love you have shown in your Son, Jesus. Strengthen marriage relationships all over the world and bring strength and stability to our own home as well. In the name of Jesus, the eternal bridegroom. Amen!

STUDY TWO: PARENTS AND CHILDREN

The relationship between parents and children is another relationship that matters deeply to God. It's not always clear that these relationships are a gift to both parents and children, especially during high school years.

All relationships suffer under the curse of sinful brokenness, but it seems like the relationships between parents and children can be especially strained. Parents often feel like a drag or an embarrassment to their kids. ("I can't take one more bad joke in front of my friends, dad.") Kids often add stress to their parents' lives. ("Your daughter is driving me insane today!")

Yet, as we said before, the relationship between parents and children is intended to be a gift to everyone involved. Our hope is that by looking at what God's Word has to say about parents and kids, everyone's eyes might be opened to see more clearly that the relationship you share has been given you by God for your good.

OPENING DISCUSSION

Becoming a parent is one of the most monumental moments in a person's life. Once you have a child, you are never the same. The experience changes you in a profound way. If you've never talked about what this experience has been like for you, now is your chance. (If this is something you've talked about before, go ahead and share again.

Parents, tell the group the story about what it was like becoming a parent.

- How did you first find out you would be a parent? How did that feel?
- What were the first moments like after bringing your first child home?
- What did you experience each time you brought another child home if you have multiple children?

STUDY

When we open God's Word, we see that the relationship between parents and children not only applies to the family but also to God's relationship to us as well as God the Father and God the Son. Throughout the Scriptures, God is referred to as Father and his people are frequently referred to as children.

Read Psalm 103:13

Questions for ALL:

1. *How is God like a Father according to this passage? [He shows compassion to his children.](#)*
2. *What does compassion mean? (see 103:11-12 for help)*

Read Malachi 3:16-17

Questions for ALL:

1. *What does the LORD call his people in this passage? He calls them his "treasured possession."*

Question for Parents:

1. *How are your kids like a treasured possession to you?*

Read Deuteronomy 14:1-2

This is Moses speaking to the people of Israel on God's behalf.

Questions for Kids:

1. *What are God's people called in this passage? Sons of the LORD your God.*
2. *How did they get to be sons? The Lord chose them.*

None of us gets to choose who our parents are. We are simply placed under their care by God. This is the case for us in our relationship with God too. We don't choose God. He chooses us and makes us a part of his family.

As you read through the rest of the Old Testament, you find that the people of Israel, the chosen sons and daughters of the Lord, fail to live up to his commands. Yet, the compassionate and loving Father doesn't abandon his children. Instead, he sends his own Son, Jesus, to fulfill all that he has commanded and make a way for us to become a part of the family of God.

Repeatedly in the Gospels, Jesus refers to God as his "Father."

Read John 5:19-24

Question for ALL:

1. *What does the relationship between the Father and the Son look like in this passage? Whatever the Father does is what the Son does. They both give life. They both receive honor. Whoever receives the Son's Word passes from death to life.*

Read Luke 11:1-4

Question for All:

1. *When we pray, how do we address God? As Father*
2. *What do you think it means for us to call God, "Father?"*

Martin Luther in his explanation to the introduction of the Lord's Prayer says the following, "With these words (Our Father) God wants to entice us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask

him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children as their loving father."¹

Read Luke 23:46

Question for ALL:

1. *Even from the cross, who is Jesus in relationship with? **The Father.***
2. *What do you make of Jesus committing his Spirit into the Father's hands as he breathes his last?*

The death and the resurrection of Jesus are the ultimate acts of a faithful Son of God. These works of Jesus make it possible now for us to become the children of God, who walk in the way of Jesus.

Read John 1:11-13

Questions for ALL:

1. *Who are the people who become children of God? **Those who receive him. Those who believe in his name.***
2. *How are these children born and how are they not born? **Born of God, not of blood nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man.***
This can be a good moment to discuss Baptism, even if it isn't mentioned explicitly here. You can also reference the story of Nicodemus on John 3:1-8 as well.

Read 1 John 5:1-5

Questions for ALL:

1. *What do the children of God do in these verses? **They love the Father. They obey his commandments. They overcome the world. They believe that Jesus is the Son.***
2. *What does it mean for you to live out your calling as a child of God?*

APPLICATION

When we all recognize that we have been loved by the heavenly Father and that we have been brought into the family of the Father by the work of the Son, it changes how we view our own relationships as parents and children. The Scriptures talk about parent/children relationships in many places. Here are just a few examples:

Read Colossians 3:20-21

Read Ephesians 6:1-4

Read Proverbs 22:6

¹ Martin Luther, "Small Catechism," *The Book of Concord*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 356.

Questions for Children:

1. *What do these verses ask of you? Obey your parents. Honor your father and mother.*
2. *What would it look like for you to live these instructions out well? (If you have a hard time coming up with ideas, you can always ask your parents.)*
 - a. *Parents, how can you encourage your kids to do these things?*

Questions for Parents

1. *What do these verses ask of you? Don't provoke your children to anger. Bring them up in discipline and instruction of the Lord.*
2. *What would it look like for you to live these instructions out well? (Your kids may even have a few ideas here.)*
 - a. *Kids, how can you encourage your parents to do these things?*

Spend some time planning activities that can be done as a family that can help you develop a Christ-centered relationship and learn to communicate in a God pleasing way. Maybe you choose a regular night to make dinner together or you institute a regular game night. Don't just talk about it! Put something on the calendar that you can look forward to as a reminder of what you learned today.

CLOSING

As you wrap up this study, turn to one another and ask "how can I pray for you?" Parents, pray for your kids. Kids, pray for your parents. To conclude, you can pray:

Heavenly Father, you have made us your children and you have given us new birth in your Son, Jesus. Help us as we live out our callings as parents and children that together we might serve you with joy and encourage one another in faith. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

SESSION THREE: SIBLINGS

There's nothing quite like a sibling relationship. One moment, you can be best friends. Another moment, and you can be at each other's throats.

In this study, we zero in on the relationships between brothers and sisters, examining for ourselves what it means for us to live out these relationships well in light of what God's Word has to say to us.

OPENING DISCUSSION

In the previous two studies, we have begun telling real stories. Let's use our imaginations a bit more this time.

Imagine you have the power to create the ultimate sibling. The super sibling can be a brother or a sister. The sibling can be any age, possess any ability, and exhibit any regular human traits.

Parents and kids: share what your super sibling would look like. Why did you choose to imagine this person that way?

(Remember, this is not an opportunity to bash any real-life siblings. This is meant to be a fun, imaginative exercise to get you talking. 😊)

STUDY

When we open the Bible, we see many occasions when sibling relationships play a significant part in the story. Often, these relationships bear very real marks of sinful brokenness. Look at a few examples:

Read Genesis 4:1-10

Questions for ALL:

1. *Why did the LORD have regard for Abel's offering rather than Cain's? (see Hebrews 11:4 as well). Abel brought the firstborn and the fat portions. He made his offering in faith, and the faith offered a blood sacrifice.*
2. *How does the sibling rivalry ultimately end up? Cain murders Abel*

The first sibling rivalry becomes so intense it leads to the first ever taking of another's life. As you keep reading in Genesis, you see continued struggles between siblings.

Read Genesis 25:21-28

Question for ALL:

1. *What does God say about the two nations in Rebekah's womb? They will be divided, and the older will serve the younger.*

Question for Parents:

1. *How do we see division not only between the boys but also between their parents? Isaac loves Esau, while Rebekah loves Jacob.*

The way the story unfolds (if you have time, you can read Genesis 27 for yourselves) is that Jacob ends up stealing the birthright and blessing that belonged to his older brother Esau. He becomes the inheritor of double inheritance and the promises of the covenant through trickery. Even his mother is involved in the scheme.

Question for Kids:

1. *What stands out to you in these stories?*
2. *What do they make you think about your own relationships with brothers and/or sisters?*

The sibling rivalry moves into the next generation too. Jacob ends up having twelve sons by four different women. Joseph, the eldest son of Jacob's most beloved wife, receives a special coat from his Father. His brothers envy him. The situation gets even worse because Joseph tells his father and brothers about dreams he had where his brothers, mother, and father are all bowing down to him. That probably didn't sound like a great idea to his brothers.

His brothers decide to get rid of him once and for all, selling him to a band of merchants heading down to Egypt. Joseph serves as a slave in Egypt, then gets imprisoned, but eventually ends up second-in-command to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Because of a famine in the land, he reunites with his brothers who have come to Egypt in search of food and have no idea who he is.

Joseph makes himself known to his brothers and helps relocate his father's whole household to the land of Egypt. After Jacob, their father, dies, Joseph's brothers worry that Joseph might try to get revenge. It turns out, though, that through all the ups and downs, twists and turns, God is working everything together for good.

Read Genesis 50:15-21

Questions for ALL:

1. *What does Joseph say in verse 20? You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.*
2. *What do you learn about God from this passage?*
3. *How does this impact how you view some of the brokenness in your own relationships?*

There was another man who had been rejected by his brothers and condemned by them. He was sentenced unjustly not just to imprisonment, but to death. Evil was heaped upon him. Yet, what had been intended for evil, God used for the ultimate good in Jesus when he raised him from the dead. Resurrected, Jesus is the firstborn of a whole new family of people who dwell in him.

The Scriptures talk about Jesus as our brother in several places. He truly is the ultimate sibling.

Read Romans 8:24-29

Questions for ALL:

1. *What parallels do you see between this passage and the story of Joseph?*
2. *What does it mean to be conformed to the image of his Son? **It means that our hope is that we will be raised to new life with him someday.***

Read Hebrews 2:11-12

Questions for ALL:

1. *What does it say that Jesus, the one who sanctifies, is not ashamed to do? **Call his people his brothers.***
2. *Share a time when you were proud to call your brother or sister your sibling.*
3. *What does it mean for you that Jesus isn't ashamed to call you his brother or sister?*

APPLICATION

There are many different routes we could go here. What does it mean for us to live out our callings as brothers and sisters faithfully? Jesus tells us in Mark 3 that those who keep his word are truly his family, so that's part of what it means for us to be good brothers and sisters. Loving our neighbor, especially when our sibling is our neighbor, is important, no doubt.

What if took our callings as brothers or sisters as opportunities to help our siblings grow in faith too?

There are a couple of sets of brothers among Jesus' twelve disciples. In the Gospel according to John, it is Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, who first introduces Peter to Jesus.

Read John 1:35-42

Questions for ALL:

1. *What does Andrew tell Peter? **"We have found the Messiah."***
2. *What does Andrew do next? **He brings Peter to Jesus.***

Questions for Kids:

1. *How might you encourage your siblings in their walk with Jesus?*

Question for Parents

1. *How could you encourage and assist your kids to help them strengthen each other in faith?*

Spend some time talking about how you see God working through your siblings/children. Even when we have disagreements, siblings are often able to encourage and uplift each other in ways other people can't. It might be awkward but sharing the positive ways you see God gifting and working through each other can go a long way.

CLOSING

As you wrap up this study in prayer, take time to pray for your siblings. Divide up so that each person gets prayed for individually by one other person. Take all kinds of prayer requests. Parents, feel free to remember your own siblings during this time. Once you have finished praying for each other, you can conclude in prayer together:

Heavenly Father, you have assembled us together as a family and have made us a small part of the body of Christ. Continue to strengthen all our relationships with one another and use us to keep bringing each other to you. Thank you for this time in your word. Help it to dwell in us richly. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!