

Session 10

Family Life

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

The most basic expression of the Church, the Body of Christ, is the family. Martin Luther reminds us of Jesus' words, "Wherever two or more are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." Family is the most fundamental building block of our society and culture as well. We plan strategically, manage intentionally, and manifest our commitment in many other areas of our life that are far less important than our families. Yet without intentional care, life in our families can easily suffer from neglect resulting in broken relationships, stress, and chaos that compromises our witness to the world.

No family is perfect but in family life, we learn how to love and care for others. We learn the value of community for which we were created. We experience all that it means to be accepted, valued, and cherished. In family life our faith is nurtured, and we become resilient in our capacity to face all that life will bring in both joys and sorrows. This session is designed to assist you in focusing on ways to increase your love, intimacy, purity, and connection with those who are your closest "neighbor," your family, your spouse, children, extended family, blended family, as well as living single.

Time in the Word

Scripture reading —Genesis 2:7-8; 18-25

(T)hen the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

Large Group Discussion

1. In the context of the entire creation narrative what is unique about the creation of men and women?
2. What does this Scripture say about our need to be in relationships?
3. What does this text say about the nature of marriage and God's original plans for marriage?
4. In a culture that values "rugged individualism" how have we manifested our need to relate? Are the methods employed today creating true human community or an artificial expression of community?
5. What does true community require?

Small Group break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

Have each person share how things are going in their family life. Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

Where are you now? (Current Reality)

Where do you want to be? (Vision)

Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)

How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)

What resources will you need?

How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Remind participants:

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. They should set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next session: "Finances."

Wrap-up

Close in prayer.

Helpful Resources

Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Devotions: Week Twelve & Thirteen

Weekday 1 – Thursday

Scripture reading — Psalm 133:1-3

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! ²It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! ³It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. What does this Scripture say about the importance of our relationships?

4. What does this text say about family relations?

5. What does true community require?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2 – Friday

Scripture reading — Matthew 19:3-8

“And Pharisees came up to [Jesus] and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”⁷ They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?”⁸ He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does Jesus view the relationship between husband and wife?
4. When has your heart ever grown hardened in your marriage or other significant relationships?
5. What is the solution to “hard-heartedness?” How can you proactively prevent it?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Saturday (before worship...preparing)

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Look back over the week, consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?

2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday (after worship...pondering)

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 3 – Monday

Scripture reading — 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase? In Chapter 12 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he describes the unity and diversity in the Body of Christ and how each part or person is valued and essential. He introduces the 13th chapter with these words, “And yet I will show you the most excellent way.”
4. How is the nature of the love described in this text different from the way the world defines love?
5. What happens to relationships when love is reduced to feelings?
6. How does this description reflect the way you love your family? What weakness did you notice in the way you manifest your love?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 4 – Tuesday

Scripture reading — Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4

²¹submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²²Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

²⁵Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body.

³¹"Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

¹Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³"that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." ⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. What do you see as the connection between love and mutual submission?

4. How does this relate to our relationship with Christ and his Body, the Church?

5. What exactly could you do to improve your relationships with your spouse, children, parents, extended family? In what ways could you engage in greater submission expressing your love?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5 – Wednesday

Scripture reading — Ephesians 4:25- 5:2

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Focus Questions

Recording your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How are honesty and love related? What was the effect of an episode of dishonesty in your family relationships?
4. Has your anger ever compromised one of your family relationships? What was the result and how was it resolved?
5. What does this Scripture tell us we must be willing to do as we talk with others? Think of a person close to you and list what you can do to grow in building them up.

6. What does it mean to walk in love as Christ loved us?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you haven't started yet, try doing that today!

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Weekday 6 – Thursday

Scripture reading — Galatians 5:22-26

“But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another.” (TLB)

Focus Questions

Recording your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does the Holy Spirit produce the fruits of the Spirit in your life?
4. As you pray about these fruit, which fruit and which family member most leads me to think and pray?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7 – Friday

Scripture reading — 1 Corinthians 7:17

“Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them.” “And don’t be wishing you were someplace else or with someone else. Where you are right now is God’s place for you. Live and obey and love and believe right there. God, not your marital status, defines your life.” (MSG)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Living a single life, as well as living life in a marriage, can be a blessing. Each has its challenges and rewards. It is easy for us to develop relationships with those who have a similar calling, but what about involving those in our life with a different calling? Who could you invite into a closer relationship who is in “another” calling (single or married)?
4. Where is God’s place for you right now and how is he calling you to “live, and obey and love and believe” right there?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Saturday (before worship...preparing)

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Look back over the week, consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?
2. What prayers will I lift up?
3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?
4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?
5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday (after worship...pondering)

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 8 – Monday

Scripture readings — Song of Solomon 1:2, 4:3, 4:16 (or all 8 chapters)

^{1:2}Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine;

^{4:3}Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.

^{4:16}Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Intimacy in marriage is a thing of beauty to be enjoyed and cherished. What words will you compose to express all your spouse means to you?

4. What can you do to improve the romance and intimacy of your marriage?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 9 – Tuesday

Scripture reading — James 4:1-3; 7-10

“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. In every relationship there are sure to be fights and quarrels. This text reminds us to begin resolving them by looking internally. Think of a problem or issue in your family. How have you contributed to the problem? What will you do, or stop doing, to make a positive impact on that situation?
4. What new ways of conflict resolution did you find helpful in this text? How can you implement them in your family? In other relationships?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ.

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 10 – Thursday

Scripture reading — Deuteronomy 6:6-7

⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. What practices enrich your spiritual life and keep God's work on your heart?

4. What practices are in place to ensure children receive positive spiritual direction?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Reflect on this week.

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. Begin today if you've been putting it off.

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you? To get started, which one do you choose?