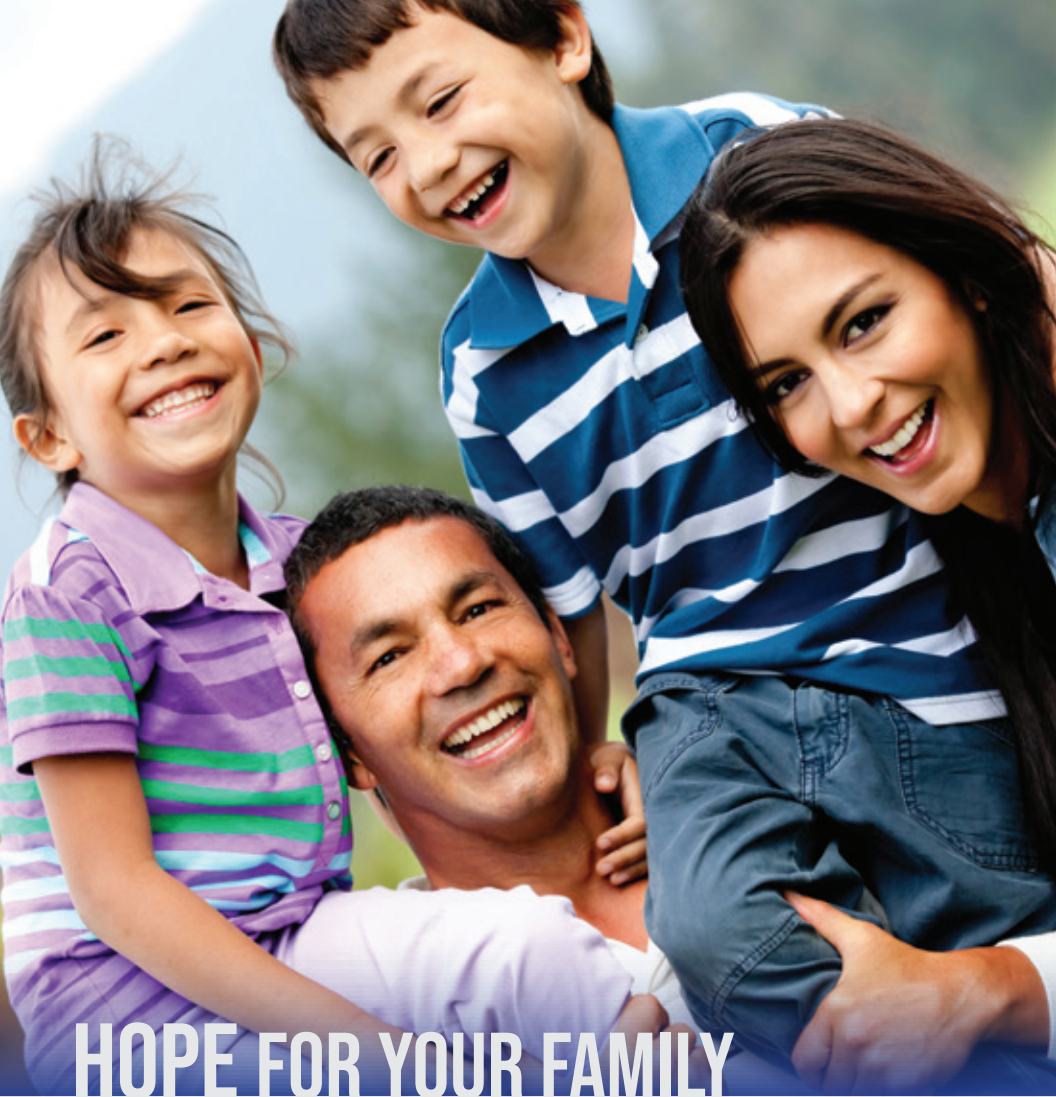




 **3ABN** BIBLE STUDY GUIDES
Looking Higher

HOPE FOR YOUR FAMILY



HOPE FOR YOUR FAMILY

To discover what someone is really like, observe them at home. We can talk respectfully with strangers and show kindness to co-workers, but as the saying goes, “Home is where the heart is.” The true condition of the heart is revealed in how we treat those we love most. Who we are begins at home, and the steps to become the person God intends us to be begin at home, as well. Just as the sweet aroma of a home-cooked meal spreads from room to room, wafting through the windows and into the street, God’s love takes root in the heart and spreads from person to person in the family until the home overflows with God’s sweet, inviting Presence.

1 How does God feel about marriage and families?

Psalm 68:6 “God sets the solitary in families ...”

Hebrews 13:4 “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled ...”

Psalm 127:3 “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.”

Marriage, families, bringing children into the world, and raising them to walk with God was His plan from the beginning. Families received His blessing when God said, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28). “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

2 What is God’s intention for what marriage and family should be like?

Genesis 2:24 “... a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Song of Solomon 8:7 “Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it ...”

Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12 “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor.... Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

Genesis 18:19 “... he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord ...”

Marriage is a sacred gift from God for the purpose of experiencing His love. When marriage follows God’s plan, a completely unique and independent man and woman who submit to God’s leading, willingly unite in selfless harmony for life. When God’s love fills the marriage, love does not fade, but grows stronger. Each person is a more effective demonstration of God’s love when they experience that love through a spouse. God adds even greater joy in a marriage through the privilege of procreation. He invites us to participate with Him in creating a new and unique person and teaching them the love of God.

3 Why are families important to God?

Psalm 145:4 “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.”

Isaiah 8:18 “Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders ...”

John 13:35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The tangible and convincing sign to the world that God’s power is real is

when it is revealed in the home with the most important, and sometimes most challenging, relationships. A God-led family that demonstrates divine love is a living object lesson, showing what Heaven is like here on Earth.

4 Many people claim to be counselors. Whose wisdom can I trust to really help my family?

Psalm 105:4 “Seek the Lord and His strength ...!”

Psalm 127:1 “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it ...”

God has not left us to guess or experiment with the lives of other people. Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit reveals God’s wisdom for building strong families where there’s joy, harmony, and intimate closeness with God.

5 How can family be a blessing when my loved ones are so difficult to love?

Ephesians 5:1 “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.”

Psalm 103:8, 10 “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. ... He has not dealt with us according to our sins ...”

God blesses us through our families with daily opportunities “to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29). Family is God’s tool for sanctification, through which He teaches us to be just like Him. God is merciful, patient, and forgiving when we do not deserve it. He loves unconditionally, even when we do not meet the conditions. Through our families, God invites us to come closer to Him by practicing His mercy, patience, forgiveness, and unconditional love—especially when it is difficult.



“Death and life are in the power of the tongue ...”
Proverbs 18:21

6 Has God given an example we can follow for our families?

Matthew 11:29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me ...”

John 15:12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

1 John 3:16 “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

Jesus is our pattern. As He was laying down His life for us, He cared for the needs of Mary, His mother (John 19:26–27). His thoughts were for each member of the human family He came to save—even those who were taking His life. “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ ...” (Luke 23:34).

7 What is the first step I should take to build a strong family?

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

John 7:38 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

Begin with yourself; not with your comfort and pleasure, but with your friendship with God. Instead of looking for the right person or trying to change someone else to become the ideal person you want them to be, invite God to change you into the right person who overflows with love, the way God loves.

8 Where do I find the strength to love my family the way God does?

Psalm 18:35 “... Your gentleness has made me great.”

Jeremiah 31:3 “... I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”

Psalm 144:15 “... Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!”

Love comes from God (1 John 4:8). Contemplate what He has done for you. We show love to our family because God is good, not because another person has earned it. Our value and our ability to love do not depend on another person. Even if others hurt or disappoint you, “you are complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10).

9 What powerful tool can bring joy and healing in my family?

Proverbs 18:21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue ...”

James 1:19 “... be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

Proverbs 15:1 “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”



“We need a change that goes deeper ...”

Words can either be a piercing sword or a healing medicine (Proverbs 12:18). Relationships are destroyed by hasty and abusive words that are not forgotten. Jesus even declares that angry words are as destructive as murder (Matthew 5:21–22). By God’s grace, you may “let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for ... edification” (Ephesians 4:29). Instead of venting frustration or anger on those you love, or criticizing and complaining about them to another person, take your emotions to God in prayer and ask Him to change your heart. With sincerity and determination, pray this prayer: “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3).

10 How can I control the words I speak, so that they give life to my family?

Luke 6:45 “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Proverbs 23:7 “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he....”

We can’t simply change our words. What we speak flows from what is in our thoughts. We need a change that goes deeper than just forcing ourselves to say kind words. This is why we must keep our heart “with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Our thoughts may be hidden within us, but they are always revealed in words and actions.

11 What thoughts does God lead me to have toward my family?

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

1 Peter 1:18–19 “... you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ”

We protect and treasure what is valuable to us, and Jesus shows us that each spouse, parent, and child is worth the immeasurable cost of His own

life. Each person is unique, made “in the image of God” (Genesis 9:6), and can never be replicated. When we consider the price Jesus paid for our family, we will begin to comprehend their infinite value, and naturally show them that they are precious in God’s sight (Isaiah 43:4).

12 How can I treat my spouse and my family like they are a precious treasure?

Philippians 2:3–4 “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Matthew 20:26 “... whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.”

Acts 20:35 “... remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Families do not become strong by spending money on vacations, meals, gifts, comfortable homes, or cars. God’s power to change a family comes through people who put the needs of others first, sacrificing their own comfort, hobbies, devices—even their desire for food. Instead of focusing on unfulfilled needs or desires, fulfill God’s great purpose for you to bless your family by seeking to understand and meet their needs. Jesus “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Your family will know you value them as a priceless treasure when you lead the way in “giving preference to one another” (Romans 12:10).

“... each spouse, parent, and child is worth the immeasurable cost of His own life.”



13 What obstacle stands in the way of happiness in both marriages and families?

James 3:16 “For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”

Proverbs 13:10 “By pride comes nothing but strife ...”

All kinds of family misery—bitterness, abuse, disease, anger, criticism, jealousy, dishonesty, and the like—trace their source to the first sin in Heaven: Satan’s pride and selfishness. The enemy of families loves to hurt God by hurting those He loves. Through pride and selfishness, he destroys relationships, distorting marriage and family into “personal possessions” that exist for selfish pleasure, and then can be pushed aside when they no longer satisfy.

14 How can I defend my marriage and family against Satan’s attacks?

Romans 13:14 “... put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

Psalm 101:3 “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes ...”

Satan loves to destroy families with temptations and addictive behavior that surround us on every side. Flee from temptation. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Do not let any temptation, whether it be pornography, mental fantasies, substances, or romantic or sexual pleasure outside your marriage, come between you, your spouse, and God. Shut the door firmly against even the smallest temptation, and seek godly encouragers who will join with you to “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation” (Matthew 26:41).



“The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.”
Proverbs 17:14

15 What are some examples of what God’s love looks like in a family?

For an extended study on Christian character in the home, read these additional Bible texts.

Philippians 2:14 “Do all things without complaining and disputing.” (Proverbs 21:9; Ecclesiastes 9:9; Proverbs 12:25)

Be a cheerful encourager who brings joy into the home with kind and happy words.

1 Corinthians 13:4-6 “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.” (Romans 15:1; 1 Peter 3:1, 7; Ephesians 4:31)

Love from God is not just a feeling, but a commitment. Study this text along with the example of Jesus’ love, then, with God’s help, practice these principles in your home.

Matthew 7:3 “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew 5:23-24; 1 John 1:8; James 5:16)

Recognize your faults. Be quick to apologize, and request forgiveness.

Proverbs 17:14 “The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.” (Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18; Ecclesiastes 7:9)

Be the first one to stop an argument or conflict; “... do not let the sun go down on your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26).

Proverbs 19:20 “Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise” (Proverbs 15:32; James 1:5)

Pray about and discuss decisions without criticism. Be respectful when there is disagreement.

Philippians 4:5 “Let your gentleness be known to all men” (2 Timothy 2:24; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Ephesians 4:2-3)

Don’t be harsh or inflict pain. Never discipline in anger.

Colossians 3:23 “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” (1 Timothy 5:8; Luke 16:10; Proverbs 31:13-27; Proverbs 10:4)

Participate in the work of the home. Take care of your responsibilities.

Colossians 3:9 “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.” (Ephesians 4:25; 1 John 3:18)

Commit to never lie. And follow through on your promises.

16 How can I experience healing when I have been hurt by someone I love?

Proverbs 17:9 “He who covers a transgression seeks love ...”

God’s path of healing is through “forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge ...” (Leviticus 19:18). Extending mercy takes time, humility, and faith that God’s love can restore broken lives to be even stronger than they were before. God blesses the decision to forgive because it unites us with Him. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven ...” (Psalm 32:1).

17 What important instruction does God give to those who are preparing for marriage?

Song of Solomon 2:7 “... do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.”

2 Corinthians 6:14 “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers...”

Instead of searching for a spouse, pray for and practice a Christ-like character so you can be a good spouse. Marriage will not change your habits or your character. Instead, follow the pattern God set with both Adam and Eve—who met God first, before He introduced them to each other (Genesis 2:15–22). Reserve all sexual intimacy for marriage, so that it may be a joyful blessing (1 Corinthians 6:18). Marry someone who shares your faith and convictions, so you can be a united example for God.

18 What important instruction does God give to husbands and wives?

Exodus 20:14 “You shall not commit adultery.”

Matthew 5:28 “... whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Marriage is an exclusive relationship. “My beloved is mine, and I am his ...” (Song of Solomon 2:16). True intimacy comes when no one else enters the emotional and physical bond of husband and wife. Joseph’s response to the temptation of sexual immorality was, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). See Proverbs 6:24–29.

Numbers 30:2 “If a man makes a vow ... he shall not break his word ...”

A marriage vow is a sacred covenant that includes more than a bride and a groom. God is the main character: “Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:9). God keeps His promises to us, and we should do the same. A difficult marriage does not mean divorce is the answer. While God permitted divorce in cases

of adultery, He did not require it (Matthew 19:8–9). We should do what is in our power to bring peace without divorce.

Colossians 3:19 (NIV) “Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”

Abuse is never acceptable in any relationship, and must stop immediately. Because your thoughts, intentions and actions affect your spouse forever, it is your sacred responsibility to be their protector. Love your spouse wholeheartedly by seeking their greatest good in Christ.

Ephesians 5:25 “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

Ephesians 5:22–23 “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church ...”

God’s gift of unity in marriage restores it to reflect what God is like. Following Jesus’ example, a husband should gladly sacrifice his own comfort for the good of his wife. And a wife can trust the godly leading of her husband when he chooses to submit to the leading of God by putting her needs above his own. Put God’s plan into practice by praying together to seek God’s will in decisions and troubles you face.

19 What important instruction does God give to parents?

Ephesians 6:4 “... do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

Our children belong to God. He has entrusted them to us that we may share His joy of providing for their needs and giving an example of a life submitted to God. Make your children’s relationship with God a top priority. After your personal time with Jesus, enjoy a time of family worship each day (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). Pray with and for your children in every stage of their life. When Jesus returns, our possessions will pass away, but relationships can continue into eternity.

“Put God’s plan into practice by praying together ...”



WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS FOR ME IN GOD'S PLAN FOR MY FAMILY?



1. God's principles to strengthen a family work in all human relationships. "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

2. Doing what is right for your family will bring a blessing, even if it is difficult. "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9).

3. Don't give up on a difficult family relationship. God can bring healing when we work with Him to love others. "... 'love will cover a multitude of sins'" (1 Peter 4:8).

4. God wants to bless your marriage. "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22).

5. Jesus loves children of all ages. "But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 19:14).

6. Your godly example can bring your loved ones to Jesus. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:14, 16).

7. God can help you leave a lasting legacy through your family. "... I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Timothy 1:5). "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off ..." (Acts 2:39).

LESSON SUMMARY

1. Marriage is a covenant with God, a holy gift that draws you closer to Him.

2. Every step of parenting is a godly experience that must be led by God.

3. Sin has distorted family relationships and damaged God's children. But God restores families, marriages, and you.

4. A God-led family will be an attractive witness to the world that God is love!

5. First, take in God's love by thinking of what He has done for you. Then you will be able to love the people in your life.

6. Follow Jesus' example of humility. Lead the way by putting others first, and meeting their needs.

7. Defend your family by guarding your thoughts, so you will be able to resist temptation.

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