

Homes of Peace and Healing



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 37:8; Matthew 5:22; Matthew 12:1-14; Matthew 18:15-18; Mark 7:6-13; Philippians 2:1-16; Colossians 3:12-15.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I [Jesus] leave my peace with you [Jesus’ disciples]. I give my peace to you. I do not give it [peace] to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not be afraid’ ” (John 14:27, NIV).

THE SCHOOL CHILDREN WERE TRYING OUT A NEW SEESAW. The bigger and heavier kids moved closer to the center of the seesaw. Children who weighed less stayed at the ends. When everyone was balanced, each child got a good ride. Things went fine until several bigger boys had pleasure from bouncing girls in the air like rag dolls until they screamed to get off. Then kids started piling on at the opposite ends. Each side was trying to outweigh the other. Before long, the seesaw became a painful place. No one wanted to ride on it anymore.

Family life is sometimes like a seesaw. Life is more pleasant when people respect and care for others. Sadly, people experience pain when some use their power or position in the family to rule, control, or treat others harshly. This week's lesson looks at ways relationships¹ run into difficulty. The lesson also looks at how the Bible gives wise advice that helps God's children move from hurt to healing.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: The Bible gives us principles² that can help reduce family trouble and problems.



Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 4.

¹relationships—the connections we have with people.

²principles—basic rules.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 26**SAINTS HAVE FAMILY PROBLEMS,
TOO (Ephesians 4:3).**

By faith Christian believers look forward to being with Christ in heaven (Ephesians 2:6). In daily life, they await His return and the destruction of sin. But some tension, disagreement, or even quarreling may happen. This is a part of the human experience with close relationships (Galatians 5:17). Disagreement can come because people differ widely in emotions, habits, education, and ways of looking at things. Families must find ways to respect each family member as a person as they work together and enjoy life as a group. The mark of healthy Christian relationships is avoiding disagreements and overcoming problems in Christian ways.

How does the Bible teach God's people to deal with the problems that may arise among them? Matthew 18:15-18; Philippians 2:1-16; Colossians 3:12-15.

Christian love and patience help many families to accept great differences in family members. Others find themselves in uncomfortable situations that must be solved for there to be unity and peace. If such situations are not solved, anger and bitterness may develop. Facing quarrels can be

difficult. Many people avoid facing quarrels by denying problems exist or by withdrawing emotionally. Others determine to get their way at any cost. Many give up to keep peace.

Think back over family struggles you have experienced or seen. What caused these struggles? How might they have been more easily solved? How could the principles seen in today's verses have made a difference?

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 27**PUTTING ANGER IN ITS PLACE
(Ephesians 4:26, 27).**

The Bible does not support angry attitudes (feelings) and behaviors that are destructive to individuals and relationships (Genesis 49:6, 7; Psalm 37:8; Matthew 5:22; Galatians 5:19-21). Angry attitudes and behaviors belong to the "old man"³ whom Christians are called to "put off" (Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8-10). But the Bible admits that anger is part of life in Christ (Ephesians 4:22-27).

Anger sounds an alarm inside us when we see something wrong or when something unjust happens to the innocent. Moses felt this emotion in defense of God's name and salvation (Exodus 32:19). Jesus did too when the religious leaders treated His work, the Sabbath, and the man

³"old man"—the way we were before we became Christians and were converted. Upon our conversion, we accepted a new life in Christ.

with the withered hand uncaringly and cold-heartedly (Mark 3:1-5). Injustice made David and Nehemiah angry (2 Samuel 12:5; Nehemiah 5:6). Jacob loved Rachel (Genesis 29:30) but became angry when he felt she blamed him unfairly (Genesis 30:1, 2).

What do you think “In your anger, do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26, 27, NIV) means for believers?

- “In your anger, do not sin” shows that the emotion of anger and sin are not the same. It is not a sin to feel angry. Family members are to give each other permission to feel the emotion of anger and to report their anger without guilt.
- “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Ephesians 4:26, NIV) shows that we are to deal with our anger as soon as possible. The final solution to problems that make us angry may take time. But anger can often be relieved by a “soft answer” (Proverbs 15:1). Soft answers come from listening, accepting the angry person, and recognizing the deeper feelings of fear, frustration, or hurt. Fear, frustration, and hurt can often make us angry. So dealing with these feelings help us to deal with anger.

Some people blow up as soon as they are angry. Others let their anger boil inside them. What do

you usually do with your anger? What promises can you find in the Bible that can help you have a more Christlike answer to solving your anger?



TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 28

**SUFFERING HEARTS
(2 Samuel 13:1-22).**

Research shows that the home is the most violent place in society. Family violence touches all kinds of families, including Christian families. Violence is abuse of any kind—verbal,⁴ physical, emotional, and sexual. Abuse also occurs when a person neglects someone on purpose or just forgets to show love.

The Bible includes stories of family violence, even among God’s people. What are your thoughts and feelings as you read some of these verses? Why do you think these stories are in the Bible?

⁴verbal—having to do with words. Verbal abuse is always saying unkind words to a person.

Genesis 37:12-28 _____

2 Samuel 13:1-22 _____

2 Kings 16:1-3; 2 Kings 17:17, 18;
 2 Kings 21:1, 6 _____

Parents today do not burn their children on altars to pagan gods. What are some modern abuses we find in families today?

Abuse shows that a person chooses to use power and control over another person. Abuse cannot be explained or excused by alcoholism, stress, the need to fulfill sexual desires, the need for better control of anger, or any behavior of the victim. Victims are not responsible for causing a person to be abusive. Abusers distort⁵ love, for “love does no harm” (Romans 13:10; NIV). Professional treatment can change an abuser’s behavior if the

person accepts responsibility for the behavior and tries to get help. To those who will open themselves to His presence, God is able to do much to help abusers (1) stop abusing, (2) repent of their attitudes (feelings) and behavior, (3) make positive changes, and (4) accept *agape*⁶ love to heal their own hearts and to help them love others (compare⁷ Ephesians 3:20).

Put yourself in the place of someone hurt by abuse. What words of acceptance, comfort, and hope would you like to hear? Why is it important to offer safety and caring acceptance rather than advice about how to live with the abuser?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 1

TWISTING BIBLE TRUTH (Matthew 12:1-14).

Which of the statements below do you agree or disagree with? Why?

- People who are abused should turn the other cheek (accept more abuse).
- Wives should submit (surrender) to their husbands, no matter what their husbands do to them.

⁵distort—to make something seem as if it is something else.

⁶agape—the kind of love that is based on principle, not on emotion. (A principle is a basic rule of life that helps to make more specific rules.)

⁷compare—show how things are the same.

- Violent behavior by a spouse⁸ or a parent is just something some people have to accept.
- The pain we face in life is for our final good.

Victims of violence in Christian families need help to find safety for themselves and their children and to meet other emotional needs. Times of domestic (home) violence are times of great spiritual crisis. People who are being abused often ask the following questions: Where was God when I was being abused? Is God punishing me for something I have done? Or is He trying to teach me a lesson? Sometimes their beliefs or the advice they receive will prolong (make longer), rather than relieve, the abuse.

No Christian principle supports or accepts abuse. Those who use Bible verses to defend abusive behavior are guilty of twisting Bible truth. Christ helped people who were suffering. It is His nature to love and accept, to support and build others up. He is never abusive. His followers are asked to correct those religious and cultural beliefs that people twist to cover up family violence.

The New Testament has examples of people twisting Bible truth to prove they are right. Read Matthew 12:1-14 and Mark 7:6-13. What Bible verses might some people use to try to make their

abuse seem right?

Victims of abuse need people who are sensitive and careful about offering quick answers to their problems. Abused persons need help getting the professional care they need. Such helpers encourage victims to get professional care. They should treat them with love. They should give them peace and rest in a time of crisis.

THURSDAY—MARCH 2

THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS (Ephesians 1:7).

At the center of Christianity is forgiveness. Forgiveness is God's gift to families when hearts and relationships have been wounded.

What do the following verses tell us about forgiveness? Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 23:32-34; Romans 5:6-11; Ephesians 1:7.

Forgiveness is offered through the Cross. God's grace is a fountain that washes us clean of sin when we come to Him in repentance.⁹

When we forgive someone, we decide to let go of revenge.¹⁰ We remind our wounded hearts that Christ has suffered for our sin against God and the sin of others against us. We then pass forgiveness on. When we forgive someone, we become

⁸spouse—a husband or a wife.

⁹repentance—being sorry for your sins, wanting to stop sinning, and turning away from your sins.

¹⁰revenge—doing something bad to someone who has hurt you.

free. It does not matter if the person who sinned against us asks for forgiveness or not. But the person who has sinned against us still needs to repent¹¹ and will still suffer from the results of his or her abusive behavior.



God's grace is a fountain that washes us clean of sin.

What do the following verses tell us about forgiveness? 2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 18:32-35; 1 John 1:9.

Notice the word "if" in these verses. If God's forgiveness is to work, the wrongdoer must repent. True repentance includes stopping the negative behavior, giving a sincere apology, taking responsibility for the behavior and damage done, showing care for the pain of the wronged one, paying back for the wrongs, and making changes to be sure the sin does not happen again.

Reconciliation¹² is not the same as

¹¹repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and then to turn away from your sins.

¹²reconciliation—bringing people back together.



Break free from revenge by forgiving.

forgiveness. For reconciliation to happen, both people must want to be together again. Both people must be willing to try to rebuild trust. Through open communication and thoughtfulness of each one's needs and feelings, abusive, destructive behavior can change. Patterns (methods) of solving differences can be developed to help meet the needs of both.

How does the knowledge that God in Christ has forgiven us give us courage to forgive a wrongdoer or to make a much-needed apology?

FRIDAY—MARCH 3

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G.

White, *The Acts of the Apostles*,¹³ pp. 304–306; “The Measure of Forgiveness,” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 243–251; *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 142; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 100.

Righteous (holy) anger: “It is true there is such a thing as righteous anger, even in the followers of Christ. When His followers see that God is dishonored or when they see the innocent oppressed,¹⁴ a righteous anger stirs them. Such anger comes from a sense for the right and is not a sin. But those who feel free to become angry are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and hate must be removed from the soul if we would be at peace with God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the cultural attitudes (feelings) in your society that encourage family abuse?

What can you as a class do to help church members be on guard against accepting these attitudes?

2. For those who are willing, talk about how their own family works through problems. What have they learned from their own experiences that could help others?
3. Discuss the differences between forgiveness and making excuses for another person’s abusive behavior. Why is it so important to know the differences between forgiveness and making excuses?

SUMMARY: Some differences and problems can be expected to happen in close relationships. Often, through prayerful use of Bible verses that teach about relationships, there can be fewer of these differences and problems. These verses also help Christians to deal well with any problems that remain.

¹³apostle—Jesus’ disciples who preached the gospel after Jesus returned to heaven.

¹⁴oppressed—to be treated in a mean way over and over again.