

Part of God's Family



SABBATH—DECEMBER 31

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ephesians 3:14, 15; Psalm 50:10–12; Psalm 23:1; Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 6:19–21.

MEMORY VERSE: “The Father has loved us so much! This shows how much he loved us: We are called [named] children of God” (1 John 3:1, ERV).



God also blesses the church with money. We bring our offerings to church on Sabbath.

AS CHRISTIANS, we are God's children and part of His family. God blesses His children with many wonderful gifts. One of these gifts is His trust. God trusts us to manage His work on this earth. From the start of human history, God made Adam and Eve responsible for taking care of everything He made. (Read Genesis 2:7–9, 15.) Just look at all the jobs that God trusted Adam and Eve to do: (1) God asked Adam to name the animals. (2) God made Adam and Eve responsible for taking care of the Garden. (3) God told Adam and Eve to have many children and to fill the earth with their kids and grandkids. All these jobs show us that God expects us to work with Him while we live on this earth.

God also blesses the church with money. We bring our offerings to church on Sabbath. Our church leaders collect the money for God. The money managers for the church make budgets and write checks for the work God wants done. God wants us to support His work. He also encourages us to spend our leftover money on the things we need. God wants us to help the needy, too. He also trusts us to raise His children, build His buildings, and teach new Christians Bible truth.

This week, we will study what it means for us to be part of God's family.

WE ARE PART OF GOD’S FAMILY (Ephesians 3:14, 15)

“I bow in prayer to the Father because of my work among you. From the Father every family in heaven and on earth gets its name” (Ephesians 3:14, 15, NIV). Paul uses the word picture of a family to show us that we belong to God. What hope do these verses give us?

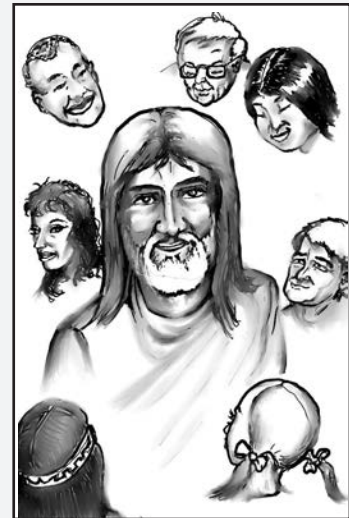
Early in His work on earth, Jesus teaches His followers to pray. Jesus says, “ ‘So this is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, we pray that your name will always be kept holy” ’ ” (Matthew 6:9, ERV). Do you see in this prayer how Jesus tells His followers to say, “Our Father in heaven”? Jesus sees us as His family. He talks about us as His brothers and sisters. That’s why, after He wakes up from the dead, Jesus says to Mary, “ ‘I have not yet gone up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them this: ‘I am going back to my Father and your Father. I am going back to my God and your God’ ” (John 20:17, ICB).

We have the same Father as Jesus. So, Jesus is our Brother. We also are brothers and sisters in the Lord. Jesus became a member of the human family on earth so that we can become members of God’s family in heaven. “The family in heaven and the family on earth are one family.” —Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 835, adapted.

What does God think about us? Read Exodus 3:10; Exodus 5:1; and Galatians 3:26, 29 for the answer. Why should this Bible truth encourage us?

Modern science teaches us that we are here only by chance and that life is an accident. But the Bible teaches us that God loves us and cares about us. So, Bible writers often use the word picture of a family to show us that God loves us very much. That’s why Jesus names Israel “My people” or says that they are the “sons of God.” As we just saw, Jesus also says that God is “our Father.” All these names teach us the same Bible truth: God loves us the way family members should love each other. That’s good news for us because life can be very difficult and hard at times.

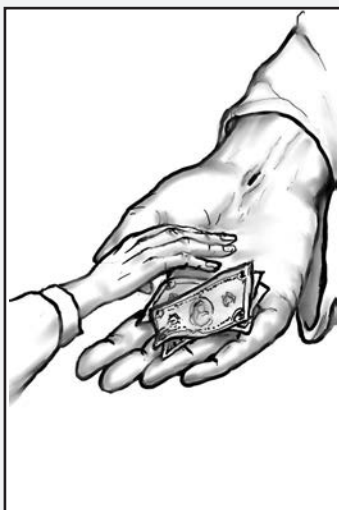
What would happen if we loved everyone the same as we loved our family? How different would life be? How will our feelings about people change if we think about them as our brothers and sisters?



Jesus sees us as His family.

GOD OWNS EVERYTHING (Psalm 50:10–12)

Read Psalm 50:10–12; Psalm 24:1; 1 Chronicles 29:13, 14; and Haggai 2:8. What Bible truth do we learn from these verses? What should this message teach us about how we should feel about the things we own?



When we give to God, we are just giving back to God the things that belong to Him.

1 Chronicles tells us about King David's wish to build a house for God. This story starts in chapter 17. David told Nathan about his wish. Nathan was God's special messenger. Nathan told David, " 'Do what you want to do. God is with you' " (1 Chronicles 17:2, ICB). But that night, God told Nathan that David couldn't build God's house. So, David asked Nathan if he could draw the plans for the temple and get all the materials ready for the building anyway. David was allowed to do these two things. So, David spent his life collecting a large amount of cut stone, wood, iron, gold, silver, and brass. David ordered the building materials to be brought to the place where the temple was going to be built. Then David asked all the leaders of Israel to come together to praise God and give Him thanks.

In 1 Chronicles 29:13, 14, David prays in public. What does he say is the reason he and the people have so much to give God? Because God gave them so much. David knows that he and his people cannot brag about bringing to God these special building materials. Why? Because everything belongs to God. When we give to God, we are just giving back to God the things that belong to Him.

We need to remember this important Bible truth. God made everything in the beginning (read Genesis 1:1; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2). So, God really is the Owner of everything. That includes everything that belongs to us. Maybe we worked hard to earn what we have. But we need God and His mercy to help us take care of everything. We need God to live. So, every chance we get, we should praise God and thank Him for being so good to us. Then we will have no trouble remembering that God owns everything.

“ 'All these things didn't come from me and my people. All these things come from you. We are only giving back to you things that came from you' ” (1 Chronicles 29:14, ERV). What does this important rule teach us about God? How should we feel about Him and everything we own?

GOD GIVES HIS FAMILY MANY GIFTS (Psalm 23:1)

God's best gift to His children is Jesus Christ. Jesus brings us peace, forgiveness, and mercy for daily life and for spiritual growth. Jesus gives us the hope of everlasting life. Jesus saves us.

“ ‘God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life’ ” (John 3:16, NIV). “But some people did accept him. They believed in him. To them he gave the right [the honor] to become children of God” (John 1:12, ICB).

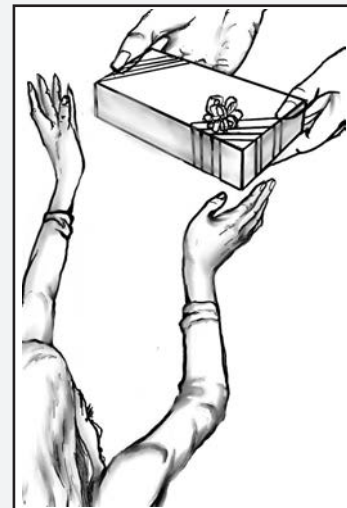
God also gives us so much more. Many people are worried about having enough food to eat and clothes to wear. Jesus says to them, “ ‘What you should want most is God's kingdom and doing what he wants you to do. Then he will give you all these other things you need’ ” (Matthew 6:33, ERV).

Read Psalm 23:1; Psalm 37:25; and Philippians 4:19. What do these verses teach us about how God gives us everything we need each day?

When Jesus talked to His followers about His going away, He promised to send them the Holy Spirit to comfort them. “ ‘If you love me, you will do what I command. I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever. The Helper is the Spirit of truth [the Holy Spirit]. The people of the world cannot accept him, because they don't see him or know him. But you know him. He lives with you, and he will be in you’ ” (John 14:15–17, ERV). Later, Jesus adds, “ ‘The Holy Spirit is coming. He will lead you into all truth’ ” (John 16:13, NIV).

The Holy Spirit Himself gives wonderful gifts to God's children. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:4–11.)

So, we can see that God gives us life now. God gives us everything we own so that we may serve Him in this life. He gives us the promise of everlasting life, too. God also gives us spiritual gifts so that we can be a blessing to other people. Because of God “we live, and move, and are alive” (Acts 17:28, WE). “ ‘God is the One who gives life, breath, and everything else to people’ ” (Acts 17:25, ICB). We owe God everything. So, we must use all our gifts, talents, skills, money, and stuff to honor His name.



The Holy Spirit Himself gives wonderful gifts to God's children.

WHAT GOD ASKS HIS CHILDREN TO DO (Deuteronomy 6:5)

We all enjoy the spiritual blessings and gifts in this life that God gives us. It also is nice to know that we are part of God's family.

Read Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37. What do these verses mean? How do we do what the Lord asks us to do in these verses?

How do you love God with “ ‘all your heart, soul [thoughts and feelings] and mind’ ” (Matthew 22:37, ICB)? The Bible gives us the answer. The answer is interesting because it is not what most people expect.

Read the question in Deuteronomy 10:12, 13. What should our answer be? (Read 1 John 5:3 and Micah 6:8 for the answer.)



“We show that we love God when we obey his laws. His laws are not hard to obey” (1 John 5:3, WE).

Keep the law? Obey the commandments? Sad to say, many Christians believe that obeying the law is the same as trying to earn God's favor with good behavior. These Christians believe that God only wants us to love Him and our neighbor. But God says we show Him and our neighbor our love when we obey His commandments.

“We show that we love God when we obey his laws. His laws are not hard to obey” (1 John 5:3, WE). For sure, we love God, **so** we keep His commandments.

In Matthew 7:21–27, Jesus says that the people who obey God's words are the same as a wise builder. The wise builder builds his house on the rock. People who don't obey God's words are the same as a foolish builder. The foolish builder builds his house on the sand. His house is destroyed. Both builders know God's law. One builder obeys the law. The other builder doesn't. The wise builder and his house are protected from the storm. The storm destroys the foolish builder and his house.

Think about the connection between loving God and obeying His law. How does keeping the commandments show our love for God? Why do you think God wants us to show our love for Him in this way? (Hint: think about what happens when we break God's law.)

TREASURE IN HEAVEN (Matthew 6:19–21)

“ ‘Don’t save treasures for yourselves here on earth. Moths and rust will destroy them. And thieves can break into your house and steal them. Instead, save your treasures in heaven, where they cannot be destroyed by moths or rust and where thieves cannot break in and steal them. Your heart will be where your treasure is’ ” (Matthew 6:19–21, ERV).

We’ve all read stories about people who lost all their money. Wars, crime, and natural disasters can come at any time and destroy everything we worked for. Death also can come without warning. So, everything we own becomes useless to us anyway. Of course, the Bible doesn’t say it’s wrong to be rich or get riches. Jesus just wants us to remember what those riches really are for.

What does Jesus mean when He says that we should save our treasures in heaven? Jesus wants us to put God first and not money. We must use our money to support God’s work on this earth. God wants us to build up His kingdom. God wants us to help other people and bless them with our money, too.

We see these Bible rules in Abraham’s story. God used Abraham to bless everyone on the earth. The Bible says, “God called [named] Abraham his friend” (James 2:23, NIV). God said to His friend Abraham, “ ‘I will build a great [big] nation [people group] from you. I will bless you and make your name famous. People will use your name to bless other people. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you. I will use you to bless all the people on earth’ ” (Genesis 12:2, 3, ERV).

“Abraham believed God and was blessed. And so those [people] who believe God are blessed too, along with him [Abraham]” (Galatians 3:9, WE). God wishes to use us today to bless other people, just as He used Abraham in the past.

“Money has value because it can do much good. We must use our money to buy clothes for the poor and feed the hungry. Money helps us to fight evil causes. Money helps us to heal the sick. But we must use our money to buy only what we need, to bless people, and to support God’s work.”
—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 351, adapted.

“ ‘Your heart will be where your treasure is’ ” (Matthew 6:21, ERV). Where is your treasure? In heaven or on earth? What does your heart tell you?



“Money has value because it can do much good. We must use our money to buy clothes for the poor and feed the hungry.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “God’s love for His children on earth is stronger than death. God gave His Son to save us because He loves us so much. God poured everything in heaven into this one Gift. Jesus works right now in heaven to save us. Jesus gave us His life. Then He died for us. The angels also work with Jesus to help save us. The Holy Spirit goes to God for us. The Father works in all these things to save us. Everyone in heaven works together with God. God and His angels never get tired of doing everything they can to save us.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 21, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① God gives His children many wonderful gifts. All His gifts touch our hearts and fill us with thankfulness. We may say with the psalm writer, “The LORD has been so good to me! How can I ever pay him back?” (Psalm 116:12, NIV). Make a list of all the spiritual blessings and gifts in this life that God gave you. Be ready to share your list with the class. What does your list teach you about how thankful to God you really should be?



“God gave His Son to save us because He loves us so much.”

② We think about God as the One who made us. The Bible also teaches us, again and again, that God keeps life going, too. (Read Hebrews 1:3; Job 38:33–37; Psalm 135:6, 7; Colossians 1:17; Acts 17:28; 2 Peter 3:7.) Yes, God holds everything together and keeps it going: that includes all the stars we see in the sky and the blood that our hearts pump. How should this wonderful Bible truth help us understand just how much we owe God? How should this Bible truth also help us to understand better what we should do with everything God gives us?

③ The lesson talks about why Jesus is the best Gift that God gave us. Why is that so? What if we didn’t have this Gift and the hope that He offers us? What really would we have then? Nothing, right? A writer who doesn’t believe in God said that humans are nothing more than “pieces of spoiled meat on rotten bones.” If we haven’t accepted Jesus as our Savior, why is this writer right?

WORKING FOR GOD IN MALAWI

A woman saw a Seventh-day Adventist young man walking on the road on the island of Chizumulu in Lake Malawi. The woman saw he wore a Pathfinder uniform.

“Where are you coming from?” the woman asked.

The student’s name was Levison Kawonga. Levison told the woman that he had finished a Pathfinder meeting at an Adventist church. His words touched the woman’s heart.

“I used to be an Adventist,” she said sadly. “I married an Adventist man, but we divorced.” The woman told Levison that she started to go to bars and wild parties after that. Then she moved to Chizumulu and married a local high-school teacher.

The next Sabbath, the woman showed up at the Adventist church. She enjoyed the worship there, the sermon, and the fellowship with the church members. Then the woman asked Levison for Bible studies. Levison was so happy! He came to the island to share God’s love. Before Levison came to the island, he joined a club of Adventist students at Mzuzu University. The club helped Adventist students to grow stronger in their faith. Club members met two times each week to pray with each other. The club grew bigger. Later it became the Mzuzu Seventh-day Adventist Church. The students decided to go to other places in Malawi to share Jesus’ love with people. One of those places included the island of Chizumulu.

Levison visited the woman and her husband in their home. After he studied the Bible with them, Levison gave them a few books. One of those books was *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White. When Levison arrived for the second Bible study, he saw that the husband was reading *The Great Controversy*. The husband asked Levison, “Why do some people worship on Saturday and some people on Sunday?” At the end of the Bible study, the husband promised to go with his wife to church the next Sabbath.

Weeks and months passed. Then the man and his wife gave their hearts to Jesus and got baptized. Today, the man and his wife are members of the Chizumulu Seventh-day Adventist Church. They love to share Jesus with other people.

Levison believes that God can use young people to reach anyone. Levison says, “We need to take the Good News about Jesus to all people on the earth.” The Mzuzu Seventh-day Adventist Church started as a club of students. Those students were amazed what God would do when Levison went to Chizumulu. Glory to God! Part of this quarter’s 13th Sabbath Offering will support Adventist education in Africa. Thank you for your offering in second quarter 2021 that helped Adventist education in Malawi to grow.

INSIDE
Story
by A. D. V. Moyo



“Why do some people worship on Saturday and some people on Sunday?”

