

**DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 8 Oct 2018)****Read - Colossians 3:1-17**

*"...You are the people of God; He loved you and chose you for His own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another ... as the Lord has forgiven you." vs 12 and 13*

Sadly, there are too many people for whom 'family' does not conjure up great memories. Many souls have family experiences which were marred by abuse, neglect, rejection and loss and it doesn't stop there. A quote came to my attention recently: *"Pain travels through family lines until someone is ready to heal it in themselves. By going through the agony of healing you no longer pass the poison chalice onto the generations that follow. It is incredibly important and sacred work"* (unknown)

The only hope for healing *"the generations which follow"* is Christ. Read Col 3:1-17 again. He has the power to transform us as we are forgiven and we forgive. Then we discover *"love which binds all things together in perfect unity"* vs 14. The final result of this holy friendship is peace (vs 15).

Once we have that healing relationship with Christ which changes everything, then, and only then, can we begin to ask Him to transform our families. Note that Paul starts with our personal relationship with Christ (vs 1 - 17) before he goes on to family relationships in vs 18 - 20.

**Prayer:** *Lord, please give me the courage to face hurts which I carry with me from my childhood. Help me to lay them down at the foot of Your cross and to receive the healing power of Your loving, gentle Spirit, so that I may pass on Your love, wholeness and joy to the next generation.*

**DAY 2****Read - Eph 5:21-6:4**

*"Respect your father and mother..."* 6 vs 2

These verses speak of the way we should treat one another in families. The words submit, love, obey and respect are all key to healthy family life.

I do not believe anyone would argue the fact that there is very little respect left in our society. We are shocked by the way little children speak to their elders and their teachers, we are shocked by the lack of respect for laws on the road, we are encouraged to laugh at the leaders of great countries (who, if truth be told, are not always worthy of respect!). The lack of respect rolls on unstopped and seemingly unstoppable.

In the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:16 quoted in Eph 6:2-3) we are told: *"Honour your father and mother as the Lord has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you."*

The Ryrie study notes describes "honour" as "all that sons and daughters do with their lives - the way they work and talk, the values they hold, and the morals they practise." Oh, how wonderful it would be if all of us respected those with whom we live and work and, thereby, honoured them.

The place to learn respect is in the home and with our families. Children learn to respect as they watch their parents modelling respectful behaviour towards one another, their own parents and their children.

**Prayer:** *Almighty God, I pray that you will help me to treat my family with respect. I can't always agree with them, but give me gentleness and self-control, that I may Honour You as I honour them.*

**DAY 3****Read - Job 1:1-5**

*"In the morning after each feast, Job would get up early and offer sacrifices for each of his children in order to purify them". vs 8 and 9*

The trite adage: "A family that prays together, stays together" is a little irritating, because it's not quite as simple or superficial as it seems, but how very special it is when a family is united in faith! What incredible fellowship and joy they experience as they are free to share their Christian journey with one another! I think we all long for that.

We read that Job would pray regularly for his family. He wanted them to be righteous. He wanted them to walk closely with God. How precious it is to have parents who pray for us each day! Are we faithful in our prayers for our family?

This did not prevent Job and his family from going through terrible trials, but God was with Job through it all. God strengthens and carries.

God's power is released through our prayers for our parents, our spouses, our children, our siblings and our loved ones. There is no better way to express and share our love for our families and friends than to pray earnestly, specifically for each one. Write down events which are coming up in the lives of your family members. Pray for their soccer match or dentist appointment, for example. Find out how it went afterwards. Let them know they are prayed for. This will bless them so much.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, help us to pray - to truly pray - for each member of our family each day. Help us to surrender them to You and to plead for their salvation. Change their lives and ours, we pray.*

## DAY 4

**Read - Mark 6:30-34**

*“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, He said to them, “Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet pace and get some rest.” vs 31*

We know that quality time with our family is important. We make the excuse, however, that we don't have time. Our lives are too full and demanding, we say.

Quality time with family or special friends can happen anywhere. For example, we can use time in the car together to catch up on each other's lives, to share a laugh or sing.

Do regular, fun things together as a family. Perhaps kick a ball around together at the local park each Saturday, and/or set aside one night each weekend for family games.

Develop family traditions. Birthdays or other special events are great times to make decisions together about how to celebrate. Our extended family has a unique card game which we play whenever we get together. Memories and laughter bind us.

A tradition which Jesus and His family had was going to the Temple in Jerusalem together each year at Passover (Lk 2:41-52). Later, when His disciples became his “family group” He would make time to be alone with them so that they could rest and re-connect (Mark 6:30-31)

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to set aside time for You and for our family members. Teach us how to make each one feel significant and loved as You do for us.**

## DAY 5

**Read - James 1:19-25**

*“Remember this, my dear friends! Everyone must be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry”. vs 19*

Communication!!! Oh dear, how easily we misunderstand each other and take offence at what a family member has, or has not, said!

It is crucial to learn to listen carefully to one another. When a family member wants to talk, particularly children, stop what you're doing and listen with full attention. If it's a bad time, set a specific time aside so that you can listen properly. Give family members time to express their points of view or feelings. But sometimes, if you have teenagers, for example, you might have to respect their need NOT to talk!

Be open to talk about difficult things - like admitting mistakes. If we have the courage to listen even when topics are uncomfortable and opinions are contrary to ours, we give our family the space for honesty, respect and acceptance.

Encourage family members with praise. Catch them doing something right! With children, it's good to use positive character-building words eg. “I saw you... You are a *responsible* child.” Help them to hear words which encourage positive qualities.

Our elderly family members need a great deal of reassurance that they did a ‘good job’ in bringing us up. They need our forgiveness and gratitude. They also need us to listen, again and again!

**Prayer: Oh Lord, how hard it is to listen, not only to You, but to those around us. Slow us down, we pray. Teach us to listen with love.**

## DAY 6

**Read - Eph 3:14-21**

*“For this reason I fall on my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name”. vs 14-15*

The Church is called the family of God. Believers of Christ are called the children of the Father.

In 1 John 3:1 we read: *“See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children---and so, in fact, we are. This is why the world does not know us: it has not known God.”*

Perhaps these readings this week have been difficult, because you have no blood relations or they are far away, physically or emotionally. It is important to remember that our Christian friends are our “brothers and sisters in Christ”.

We have a very real responsibility to our Christian friends to care for them and to love them. As with earthly families, we don't always like what they do, but they are family and we should accept them.

1 John 3:18 continues: *“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth.”* We are called to love one another in the same way that Christ loved us and laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16). If our Christian family is not functioning as a family should, it is time we did something about it.

Jesus expects us to astound the world with the way we love one another. Let's get started!

**Prayer: Our loving Heavenly Father, thank you that you have given us a spiritual family to share this life. Help us to love them as You love us. Help us to listen and to care more.**