

# Cherish Your Family

group leader's guide

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# How to Use This Guide

This four-week discussion guide is ideal for small groups of six to twelve participants. If you are using this guide with a larger group of women, create multiple small groups of six to twelve that can consistently meet together for these discussions.

Each session includes:

- **Pair Up**—A chance for participants to reflect on their week's experiences with a partner.
- **Tune In**—A brief time of prayer focused on tuning in to God's presence.
- **Talk Through**—Small group discussion questions that open the week's themes.
- **Reflect On**—Small group Scripture exploration and discussion.
- **Live By**—A brief time of prayerful corporate Scripture contemplation.
- **Step Out**—A concluding exercise focused on life application.
- **Offer Up**—A closing prayer to wrap up your meeting.
- **Plan On**—Specifics about preparation for next week's meeting.



# Family—God's idea

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 1–8 in *Cherish Your Family*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Cherish Your Family*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

## Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Cherish Your Family* days 1–8 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

## Tune in

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

## Talk Through

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- If you were to describe your family life in just five words, what might they be? Why?
- What comes to mind for you when you think of the phrase “a happy family”? What do you picture? What feelings or ideas stand out? Why?

## REFLECT ON

Invite volunteers to read aloud **Genesis 1:27–28, 31** and **Psalm 127**.

- Why is it significant that God created human beings to form families—and that this is “very good” in God’s eyes? What purposes do you think God had in mind for creating us each to be part of a family? (Prompt participants to refer to day 2 “Ponder.”)
- Though we often have idealized pictures of a “happy family” in our minds, the reality is that we are all flawed and every family has its problems. How do some of the family dysfunctions in Scripture help you have a realistic and accepting view of your family’s issues? (Prompt participants to refer to the Scripture passages and notes in day 6 “Examine.”)
- What ugliness in your life (habits, attitudes, sin-struggles) has your family been magnifying for you lately? Though it’s painful, how can the family mirror also serve as a blessing for you? (Prompt participants to refer to day 7 “Ponder.”)
- Despite your family’s struggles or frustrations you might be facing as a wife or mom, what do you most want to celebrate about your family? Why are you grateful for your family? (Prompt participants to refer to day 8 “Ponder.”)

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Psalm 103:13–18** and **Romans 8:14–16**.

- At the heart of our understanding of how to live within and fully love our families, we need to center our identities in the “family” relationship we have with God. How is God a loving “Daddy” (*Abba*) to you? Brainstorm specific traits and examples. (Prompt participants to refer to their notes from day 3 “Examine.”)
- Is it easy or difficult for you to relate to God as your Father? Why? What insights does this give you into your own view of family relationships?
- How do you sense God may be drawing you to deepen your Father-daughter relationship with him?

## LIVE BY

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Psalm 103:13** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

*Optional:* Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.  
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.  
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## STEP OUT

Prompt participants to apply this week's study to their lives by committing to thank God for the challenging aspects of their family lives. Have participants form pairs and share with each other one or two specific challenges (such as behavior problems, sin patterns, stressors, etc.) that they're facing in their family right now. Invite women to seek out how God may be at work in and through those difficulties and encourage them to trust God and express gratitude to him for their families, flaws and all. Prompt partners to pray for each other during the week too, asking God to help their partner face family challenges with gratitude, grace, and trust.

## OFFER UP

Close by having partners pray for each other about the challenges they've shared. Remind them to express praise and gratitude to God for his creation of their family and his continued work in their family's life.

## PLAN ON

Remind participants to journey through days 9–15 for next week's meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Cherish Your Family*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



# THE FAITH CATALYST OF FAMILY

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 9–15 in *Cherish Your Family*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Cherish Your Family*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

## Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Cherish Your Family* days 9–15 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

## Tune In

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

## TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- What is one way your family life has had a negative impact on your faith and discipleship?
- What is one way your family life has had a positive impact on your faith and discipleship?



## REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Deuteronomy 6:5–9**.

- Your “job description” as a parent (see day 4) must flow *first* out of your own love-relationship with God. How do these verses challenge you? How do they inspire you? How do you sense God speaking to you through his Word?
- How do you desire to model faith to your children? What example do you desire to set? Describe it.
- Having a vibrant faith can be easier said than done during chaotic seasons of life. So what factors in your life make it difficult to maintain your spiritual vitality? Describe some of the roadblocks (either general or specific) that may be holding you back from the type of faith-relationship you desire to have with God.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Psalms 139:7–12**.

- Even during busy, difficult, chaotic, or stressful seasons of life, God is present! How can you meet God within the context of your real life? How is God teaching you or revealing his faithful presence to you through your everyday experiences? (Prompt participants to share reflections from day 10 “Journal.”)
- Family life can bring us to our knees—in emotional exhaustion, desperation, hurt, confusion, frustration, and fatigue. But God can meet us there and teach us to rely on him! What difficulties are you facing that God may be using to help you more fully depend on him? (Prompt participants to refer to day 11.)
- Both the blessings and challenges of family life can serve as opportunities for discipleship. Your daily life with your family is *full* of opportunities to express love, grace, humility, and service. Brainstorm and share specific examples of opportunities God gives you to grow in these virtues in the context of your family life. (Prompt participants to refer to days 12 and 13.)

## LIVE BY

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Deuteronomy 6:5** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

*Optional:* Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.  
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.  
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## STEP OUT

Prompt participant to apply this week's study to their lives by each identifying one spiritual discipline they will commit to do at least once this week in order to more deeply connect with God. Have participants look at day 9 "Ponder" and then turn to the "Deepen Your Discipleship" in the Go Deeper section. Invite every group member to share which discipline she will focus on as she makes her relationship with God a top priority. (Remind participants that the purpose of spiritual disciplines isn't to add to their to-do lists. These are simply avenues of connecting with God and strengthening their relationships with him.)

## OFFER UP

Close by focusing on day 11 "Internalize" together. Invite volunteers to read aloud each passage listed as everyone listens with an attitude of prayer, focusing on their desires to fully rely on God.

## Plan On

Remind participants to journey through days 16–22 for next week's meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Cherish Your Family*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



days 16–22

# Create a Family Culture

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 16–22 in *Cherish Your Family*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Cherish Your Family*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

## Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Cherish Your Family* days 16–22 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

## Tune In

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

## Talk Through

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- Reflect on your own upbringing. What was your family culture like in your home? How would you describe it?
- What positive aspects of the culture in your family of origin do you most desire to continue in your own family today? What parts of your childhood family culture do you *not* want to replicate in your own family? Why?

## Reflect On

Invite volunteers to read aloud **Romans 12:9–21**; **1 Corinthians 13:4–7**; and **Galatians 5:22–23**.

- These passages describing Christian character have powerful implications for the rhythm of life within a Christian family: how we think, how we treat each other, how we react to difficulties or to mistreatment, and more. Which Christian virtues in these passages most stand out to you as characteristics your family needs to grow in?
- Name at least one virtue from these passages that your family is pretty good at, a solid value in your family culture. Describe how you emphasize and reinforce it in your family life.
- One critical way to build a positive family culture is to spend time together. What is something your family does together that you really love (such as traditions, favorite outings, weekend activities, meals together, etc.)? Why? (Prompt participants to refer to day 19.)

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Joshua 24:15**.

- How does this passage speak to you in the context of your own family life? What is competing for your family's attention and focus? How do you desire to, together, make God your top priority?
- A solid marriage, an attitude of blessing, family bonding, sharing laughter and joy, and putting God first are all key aspects of fostering a strong, God-honoring family culture. Which of these ideas from days 17–21 most stands out to you as an area you want to focus on? Why?
- As your family grows to embody Christian virtue, your family can shine as a light to the world around you! How do you desire for your family to minister to others? (Prompt participants to refer to day 22.)

## Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Joshua 24:15** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

*Optional:* Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.  
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.  
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## STEP OUT

Prompt participants to apply this week's study to their lives by intentionally creating an experience of fun and bonding for their families. Together, turn to "Prioritize Fun!" in the Go Deeper section and read the ideas there aloud. Brainstorm other fun ideas together, from big experiences to small but special ways for families to connect. Challenge each participant to commit to one specific idea for this week and to write her commitment in her journal.

*Optional:* Have a group member take notes recording all the ideas, then e-mail your group's brainstormed list to all participants.

## OFFER UP

Close by using the day 16 "Pray" experience to guide a group popcorn prayer. Spend time in quiet reflection then take turns praying the simple sentence-prayer aloud.

## PLAN ON

Remind participants to journey through days 23–29 for next week's meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Cherish Your Family*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



# Love Your Family

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 23–29 in *Cherish Your Family*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Cherish Your Family*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

## Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Cherish Your Family* days 23–29 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

## Tune In

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God’s presence.

## Talk Through

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- When you were a kid, what experiences in your family made you feel most loved? Or, if you had a very painful childhood, what expressions of love did you long for as a child? (Prompt participants to refer to day 24 “Journal.”)
- What are some of the main ways you typically show or express love to your family members?
- Which of the descriptions of love in days 23–29 most surprised or challenged you? Which was the most different from how you typically think of love in a family context?

## REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **1 John 4:7–21**.

- Love—true love—begins with God. God *is* love and is the ultimate example of how to love. What stands out to you from these verses about God’s love? What are some other traits of God’s divine love that are important to you? (Prompt participants to refer to day 23 “Examine.”)
- We can aim to love others with God’s love, but we will, of course, mess up. We’re finite and sinful creatures. How is your ability to love different from God’s? (Prompt participants to refer to day 24 “Ponder.”)

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Lamentations 3:22–23**.

- How have you personally experienced God’s grace as described in this passage?
- How do you desire to reflect this type of grace in your love for your husband and children?
- Share specific examples of attitudes, reactions, or behavior patterns you may need to change in order to love with grace.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Ephesians 3:14–19**.

- How does this prayer express your deepest desires for your children? What other hopes for them do you have? (Prompt participants to refer to day 25.)
- Prayer, grace, gratitude, and surrender—these are all critical aspects of our love for our children. But they’re not easy to live out! We can easily lose sight of these crucial expressions of love. Which of these is hardest for you to maintain during the course of normal life? How do you desire to grow in that area?

## LIVE BY

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **1 John 4:19** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

*Optional:* Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.  
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.  
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## STEP OUT

Prompt participants to apply this week's study to their lives by forming pairs or trios for a time of honest reflection and confession. Challenge women to evaluate their own expression of love to their family members and ask them each to identify one area in which they feel convicted that they've been falling short. (Participants can focus on any of the themes in *Cherish Your Family*. They do not need to limit themselves to days 23–29.) Encourage women to listen to each other with a spirit of encouragement and grace.

## OFFER UP

Close by inviting pairs or trios to pray for each other, acknowledging God's lavish grace for their failings and inviting God to fill them with *his* love for their families. Then read **Ephesians 3:14–21** as a concluding prayer, praying both for participants and for the family members they cherish.

## PLAN ON

Remind participants to complete day 30 on their own, being sure to highlight the Go Deeper ideas.

*Optional:* Encourage women to make a personal spiritual commitment using the guidance in “Deepen Your Discipleship” in the Go Deeper section of *Cherish Your Family*. Plan to meet for coffee in a month so women can form small groups to talk about their experience of intentionally practicing spiritual disciplines. How did their focus on deepening their own spiritual life affect their family?