

# lesson eleven

JUNE 8–14

## Families of **Faith**

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*“Therefore . . . , let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1, 2, NKJV).*



How can families can stay faithful? As the saying goes, families that pray together, stay together. Prayer is the one immutable thing that keeps Christ the center of a family.

Exod. 34:7;  
Ezek. 18:4

## Introduction

# *The Sins of Our Fathers*

American singer-songwriter Sufjan Stevens bases most of his music on his experience of abandonment as a child. His life and artistry revolve around it. Thus we see that a person's experiences with their families are fundamental to their development and to their own choices. Sin is notorious for breaking down relationships. Often the devil starts his attacks with the first and most intimate relationship: the family.

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### **Out of the lineage of liars, prostitutes, and sinners, including David and Bathsheba, Jesus was born.**

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Most of us have come across the principle of a generational curse. A generational curse is a sin that perverts a family's line; the parents commit a sin, their children commit the same sin, and so forth. Exodus 34:7 reads, "He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation" (NIV). Some believe that means that God will directly penalize children for the transgressions of their parents. This seems like a cruel and unusual act for a God of love.

On the contrary, Ezekiel 18:4 reads, "For all people are mine to judge—both parents and children alike. And this is my rule: The person who sins is the one who will die" (NLT). While God disciplines only the one who has sinned against Him, the sins of one's father often permeate the family, damaging relationships and perpetuating itself among one's children. For this reason, children often suffer from their parents' mistakes, leading them to make the same mistakes in the future. In Sufjan Stevens's life and in the lives of many in the Bible, such as David and Bathsheba, we see examples of children paying for their parents' choices.

David sinned against the Lord by sleeping with Bathsheba. As a result of this, Bathsheba's grandfather, Ahithophel, advised David's son Absalom to rebel against his father, a rebellion that cost him his life. David paid dearly for his sins, the consequences of which bled into the lives of his children. The beauty of the story is that it didn't end that way. Out of the lineage of liars, prostitutes, and sinners, including David and Bathsheba, Jesus was born. Yet Jesus lived His life free of sin, ending all generational curses as well as cycles of sin and abuse present in His family. Jesus offers us adoption into His family so that our own family demons can be defeated. As a part of Jesus' family, we are no longer haunted by the sins of our fathers; instead, Jesus offers us new life in Him.

Logos  
*Turning the Hearts*

2 Sam. 12:5–17;  
Psalm 51;  
Prov. 22:6;  
Mal. 4:5, 6

***We Are a Nation at War (Mal. 4:5, 6)***

We are a nation at war! Not a war of guns and bombs, not a war of armored vehicles or F-15's, but a real war nonetheless. This battle is raged against our children, the very precious gifts God has given us.

Randall Terry says in a *Time* magazine article, "I believe that there is a devil, and here's Satan's agenda. First, he doesn't want anyone having kids. Secondly, if they do conceive, he wants them killed. If they're not killed through abortion, he wants them neglected or abused, physically, emotionally, sexually. Barring that, he wants to get them into some godless curriculum or setting, where their minds are filled with pollution. One way or another, the legions of hell want to destroy children because children become the future adults and leaders. If they can warp or wound a child, he or she becomes a warped or wounded adult who passes on this affliction to the next generation."<sup>1</sup>

**Many times children struggle with the same sins the parents succumbed to.**

Malachi informs us that God will send the message of Elijah to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Mal. 4:6, NKJV).

***The Sin of David (2 Sam. 12:5–17)***

David allowed himself to trust himself apart from God and entered into an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. Whenever you believe you can do it on your own, you are sure to fall. When David was confronted by the prophet Nathan, he sentenced himself by saying, "And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity" (2 Sam. 12:6, NKJV). God allowed David's self-proclaimed prophecy to come true.

The first son of David and Bathsheba died only seven days later (2 Sam. 12:18). Thereafter, Amnon raped David's daughter Tamar. And although David was angry, he did nothing about it. After two years, Absalom killed Amnon his brother for what he did to his sister, Tamar. David had allowed Absalom to go two years angered with grief because he would not address the issues. Some of David's sons tried to seize the throne, resulting in their deaths. All of these events transpired because of the sin of the father.

### ***David Repents (Psalm 51)***

Psalm 51 helps us understand the heart of David and his allegiance to God after he so grievously sinned against God and his family. First, it is a lesson for fathers, and parents in general, that we can go to God for forgiveness when we have erred. Second, not only can we be forgiven, but God will enable us to be reconciled back to our children.

Many times children struggle with the same sins the parents succumbed to. Parents can help their children overcome by helping them understand why they do what they do and think the way they think. By working with children in this way, the hearts of children and parents may be turned to one another. Parents ought to have honest conversations with their children. Sometimes, opening up about your own struggles will help someone else navigate theirs.

David's last words are recorded as a song in 2 Samuel 23:1–5. Great had been David's fall, but deep was his repentance; ardent was his love; and strong his faith. He had been forgiven much, and therefore he loved much.

### ***Parents Need to Be Parents and Not Just Friends (Prov. 22:6)***

It is time for the parents in our land to once again accept the responsibility of parenting. It is time we require obedience from our children. It is time, as children, that we obey our parents “in the Lord: for this is right” (Eph. 6:1). But the Bible also says, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (verse 4, NKJV). We provoke our children when we demand obedience without investing in a relationship with them. To demand obedience without a relationship will inevitably provoke rebellion. A relationship means that parents not only know their children but allow their children to know them. The goal is not to be best friends but to understand each other's thoughts and motives. This will give children some guidelines to navigate their world.

Children can find friends at school or at church. But at home, our children need parents. It is high time that parents be parents and let God turn their hearts back to their children so that their children can turn their hearts back to them.

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1. Richard Lacayo and Randall Terry, “Interview: Randall Terry,” *Time*, October 21, 1991.

## Testimony

# *The Earthly Family Is a Symbol of the Heavenly Family*

Deut. 6:5-8

“God would have our families symbols of the family in heaven. Let parents and children bear this in mind every day, relating themselves to one another as members of the family of God. Then their lives will be of such a character as to give to the world an object lesson of what families who love God and keep His commandments may be. Christ will be glorified; His peace and grace and love will pervade the family circle like a precious perfume.

“Much depends on the father and mother. They are to be firm and kind in their discipline, and they are to work most earnestly to have an orderly, correct household, that the heavenly angels may be attracted to it to impart peace and a fragrant influence.”<sup>1</sup>

### “Much depends on the father and mother.”

God allows families to be tried and tested to draw them closer to Himself. “From age to age the Lord has made known the manner of His working. When a crisis has come, He has revealed Himself, and has interposed to hinder the working out of Satan’s plans. With nations, with families, and with individuals, He has often permitted matters to come to a crisis, that His interference might become marked. Then He has made manifest that there is a God in Israel who will maintain His law and vindicate His people.”<sup>2</sup>

The family is not immune to the attacks of Satan. “While men are ignorant of his devices, this vigilant foe is upon their track every moment. He is intruding his presence in every department of the household, in every street of our cities, in the churches, in the national councils, in the courts of justice, perplexing, deceiving, seducing, everywhere ruining the souls and bodies of men, women, and children, breaking up families, sowing hatred, emulation, strife, sedition, murder. And the Christian world seems to regard these things as though God had appointed them and they must exist.

“Satan is continually seeking to overcome the people of God by breaking down the barriers which separate them from the world.”<sup>3</sup>

### REACT

1. The Bible says, “The trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:3). Can you recall an experience when God allowed a crisis to strike your family for the good?

2. Why do you think Satan especially targets the family?

1. Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 17.

2. Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 178.

3. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 508.

1 Sam. 17:12–29

## Evidence *Leave No Stone Unturned*

Sibling relationships rank among the most complex of relationships. The second familial relationship narrated in Scripture with specific detail is that of siblings. The mismanagement of Cain's emotions toward Abel led to humanity's first recorded murder. This biblical account serves as a powerful case study on how approval and conflict can stir irrational responses, especially among brothers.

### **Sibling relationships rank among the most complex of relationships.**

The Valley of Elah bears unique significance to the emergence of the biblical character David. It is there that he encounters and defeats the giant of Gath, Goliath. David's confrontation with the secret weapon of the Philistine army is met with the strategic preparation and precision of an expert shepherd boy; his weapon of choice being "five smooth stones" (1 Sam. 17:40). A closer investigation reveals that though the physical battle presents a significant layer of adversity, the additional pressure of sibling discord lurks in the background.

The dialogue between David and Eliab (verses 28, 29), the eldest of Jesse's sons, reveals animosity. David is old enough to fight but not of acceptable age to enlist in the Israelite army. Furthermore, his résumé of combat bears only the duties of a shepherd. Though David is confident in his ability to match the great giant, an unlikely character witness questions his motives. Who better to set him straight than his elder brother? If Eliab could not be convinced of David's ability and sincerity, why should anyone else be?

For David, the battle begins before the valley, yet he "did not render railing for railing; with a soft answer he turned away his brother's wrath. . . . Those that undertake great and public services must not think it strange if they be discountenanced and opposed by those from whom they had reason to expect support and assistance; but must humbly go on with their work, in the face not only of their enemies' threats, but of their friends' slights and suspicions."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing would be gained from a rash response, but all could be jeopardized if it became the focal point. The battle that David wins in this sibling rivalry is only the beginning of the victory he would gain that day. When confronted, we often throw the emotional stones of words. But David's victory teaches us to practice restraint.

1. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), p. 413.

## How-to *Becoming*

Jer. 1:5

A flower, much like our lives, starts out as a tiny seed planted among others. From the very beginning, God knew what it would be and what it would have to endure through the process of becoming. The benefits of the soil, sun, and rain abundantly provide all it needs to grow. Weathering the winds and rains and enduring the litter dumped upon them and the trampling feet of the indifferent who fail to see their worth are just a few things that make the plants more resilient.

### **God has proven Himself time and time again with showers of blessings upon those who believe.**

In Christian homes, a popular motto and practice is, “A family that prays together stays together.” There’s power in prayer, and uniting in intercessory prayer within our family units is the best thing that can be done to strengthen faith and improve each member in it. God wants us to grow to be our best, so if we keep our faces turned upward to the Son and ask Him for His blessings and then wait on Him with an expecting faith, we will receive (Luke 12:27, 28). God has proven Himself time and time again with showers of blessings upon those who believe—showers that will develop strong roots and encourage healthy growth.

God knows how to make our differences work so that everything comes together beautifully! It’s such an amazing thing when one can gather different types of flowers and arrange them in a garden or vase to create the most beautiful setting. Different species, colors, shapes, sizes, and scents complement each other. Some families wind up with members of different races, cultures, skin tones, and backgrounds, some through foster care and adoption, and God makes it work! If all remember to rely upon and obey God, He will help them gain all the strength and stability they need.

You may wonder what your value is while being raised among your family of flowers. God created them for more than just beauty. Some flowers are edible; have medicinal purposes; play important roles in our traditions of both joyous and somber occasions, providing peace, comfort, and joy; reduce stress, and alleviate anxiety. If God can have a purpose for a flower, then He definitely has one for you, even if you are not sure what it is yet (Jer. 29:11).

Do you feel as though no one is out there to love and support you, as though no one really cares? If you are living life feeling this way, you should know that you do have a Father who loves you and who is willing to do all He possibly can for you to succeed in this life and to have you by His side in the next (John 15:5; Heb. 13:5; 1 John 3:1).

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Acts 10:1–28;  
Rom. 1:16;  
John 3:16

## Opinion *Fabric of Family*

As human beings, we need to build strong bonds with others and our Creator. The family is representative of God's love, and we see the character of God in every family unit. The sacrifice, love, forgiveness, and tenacity it takes to maintain healthy family relationships is a direct reflection of the relationship between our heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ. The fabric of God's family is made of the innumerable threads of diverse families who believe and have made a choice to continue to endure with love. God is pleased with families who are generous, kind, and respectful of the law of love (Acts 10:1–28). As we study Scripture to learn what a family of faith entails, we discover examples of faithful families, the sacrifice of Christ that adopts us into God's family, and the responsibility of maintaining family through endurance and love.

### **Jesus as our Mediator gave up Himself, the best gift our human race has ever experienced.**

The Bible speaks of Cornelius and his family, stating, "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly" (Acts 10:2, NIV). Cornelius and his family exemplify what we as believers want to emulate. His prayer life and humble nature teach us that God is pleased with families that pray daily and care for the needy, those with physical ailments, homeless, orphaned, and those who have developmental delay and mental health issues. Being a part of God's family boils down to our ability to have an intimate relationship with God through prayer and being kind to others.

Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins and allowed God to forgive us and reconcile us to Himself. Jesus as our Mediator gave up Himself, the best gift our human race has ever experienced. As the Son of God, Jesus has given us an opportunity to be a part of the family of God regardless of our ethnicity, biology, background, or tradition. At the cross, Jesus said, "Forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). We have no idea what it took for God to forgive us and give up Jesus to bear the sins of the world. In John 3, we are invited to believe and receive everlasting life. The invitation to be a part of God's family is open to all who believe. There is a responsibility that comes with being a part of any family. We all have a part to play.

#### **REACT**

1. What are some characteristics that are unique to your family that you enjoy? Are there any characteristics of your family that you would like to change?
2. What are some challenges you have faced after deciding to be a part of God's family?

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## Exploration

# *In the Footsteps of Your Family*

1 Kings 15:1–4

### CONCLUDE

History shows that bad choices have trickled down to our offspring. Because of the many great biblical and personal examples we can look to, we have the power to break generational curses by simply changing the path we take. We all have some type of family dynamic that has shaped who we are. As we weather the storms of family issues and strive to grow together in faith, we need to remember there is a God who desires to save us and wants us to replicate the family in heaven so that we become examples to the world of how to be families that love God.

### CONSIDER

- Becoming a mentor (big brother or sister) to someone in foster care. Discuss success options with them. Become family to them, and try to direct them prayerfully.
- Talking to someone who had a troubled family life and who was able to overcome by breaking the generational curse and changing the direction of his or her life with God's guidance.
- Writing out five family dynamics that can cause a child to be rebellious in today's world.
- Studying the story of Jacob in the Bible and noting how his choices and the choices of others in the family affected his wife and children.
- Thinking of another metaphor besides that of a flower to parallel human growth.
- Reflecting on your own journey and how your life and your family dynamics have strengthened you. How can you use that to help someone else?

### CONNECT

Genesis 29–31; 1 Kings 15.

Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, chap. 7, "Jeroboam," pp. 99–108; *Child Guidance*, pp. 530, 531.

"Parenting," Focus on the Family, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting>.