

# Peace and Agreement in the Family



## SABBATH—MAY 11

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Ephesians 2:11–22; John 17:22; Philippians 2:3–5; Ephesians 5:21; Genesis 33:12–14.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘You are in me and I am in you. I pray that they can also be one in us. Then the world [all the people on the earth] will believe that you sent me’ ” (John 17:21, ERV).

**FAMILIES** have important experiences at different times in life. Many of these experiences are times of big change for different family members. One of the biggest changes for a family is a new baby. Children also have important experiences in life as they grow up. They may choose to start their own families and have children too.

But parents and children all have the same problem. Each one of us is born a sinner. Sin makes it very hard for us to have peace and agreement in our families.

Yes, Jesus made us all one with God and with each other. His death on the cross made this peace possible (Ephesians 2:13–16; Colossians 1:21–23). Do you want peace in your family? Of course, you do! So, you must ask Jesus to give you His loving-favor every day. Jesus' loving-favor is His gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. This special gift helps us to get along with our family members. It helps us to live with each other in peace and agreement. Again, each day we must ask Jesus for this special gift. We also must have faith that Jesus gives this gift to us.



**Sin makes it very hard for us to have peace and agreement in our families.**

**PEACE AND AGREEMENT STARTS WITH JESUS**  
(Ephesians 2:11–22)

**What word picture does Paul use in Ephesians 2:11–22? How does this word picture help us understand that Jesus joins His people together in peace? How does Jesus make “one” group out of “two groups” (Ephesians 2:16, ERV)? (Read also Galatians 3:28.)**

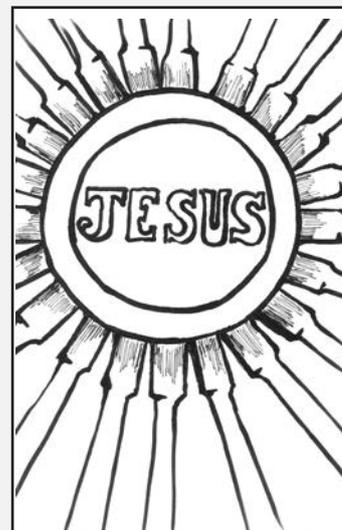
In Ephesians 2:11–22, Paul talks about the walls in the Jewish temple. These walls separated worshipers. Some walls separated the men from the women. Other walls separated the Jews from the Gentiles. Gentiles are non-Jews. These walls are a word picture for the thoughts, feelings, and ideas that separate people. But Jesus’ cross removes these “walls.” Jesus “planned to create [make] one new people out of Jews and Gentiles. He wanted to make peace between them” (Ephesians 2:15, NIV). This plan is good news! It also helps couples to become one heart, mind, spirit, and body in marriage. But what about families that are broken for a long time? Get ready for more good news! Broken families can join together in peace again too.

**Sure, it is nice to read about the peace we can have in Jesus. But what does it really mean to have that peace in our lives? What changes does Jesus make in our lives to help us have this peace? For the answers, read Romans 6:4–7; 2 Corinthians 5:17; and Ephesians 4:24–32.**

“Make a picture in your mind of a large circle. Draw lines that go from the outside edge of the circle to the center. The lines will get closer to each other as they get closer to the center. . . . In the same way, we come closer to each other when we come closer to Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, page 179, adapted.

“Jesus stands between fathers and their sons and between husbands and wives. He works for them even if they do not know about it. By ourselves, we cannot make good connections with other people. We need Jesus’ help. Bible study and obeying God will help us connect with other people too.”—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship [making new followers for Jesus]* (New York: The MacMillan Publishing Company, 1979), page 108, adapted.

**What can we do to make our marriages and friendships better and stronger?**



**We come closer to each other when we come closer to Jesus.**

**GOD'S LOVE MAKES US ONE WITH EACH OTHER  
(John 17:22)**

**“May the Lord make you grow in love for each other and for everyone” (1 Thessalonians 3:12, NLV).**



**Jesus' love changed John.**

**Jesus prayed. He asked His Father to make His followers “‘one as We are One’ ” (John 17:22, NLV). What does Jesus mean? Why do Jesus' followers need love in their hearts first before they can be one with other people? How does love help us to become one with God and each other?**

Jesus wanted His followers to be one in heart and mind. But first they needed “agape [a-ga'-pē]” love (John 17:26). “Agape” love is the Bible word for God's love. Jesus says this word in His prayer in John 17. “Agape” love also is written in many other places in the New Testament. What exactly is “agape” love? It is the unselfish love that makes God who He is (1 John 4:8). This unselfish love shows everyone who Jesus' true followers are too (John 13:35). A sinner's heart cannot feel “agape” love by itself. So, we must invite Jesus into our hearts. Then His “love” will live in us by His Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5; Romans 8:9, 11).

“ ‘Love each other as I have loved you’ ” (John 15:12, ERV). Yes, John wrote these words. But he was not always loving. When John first met Jesus, John was filled with pride. He wanted power. He got mad very fast. He talked bad about the way some people did things. (Read about John's behavior in Mark 3:17; Luke 9:54, 55; *The Desire of Ages*, page 295.) But Jesus' love changed John. Later in John's life, John remembered that Jesus kept loving him. Even when John did the wrong thing. Jesus' love changed John. Jesus' love helped John to love other people too. “We love Him because He loved us first” (1 John 4:19, NLV). “That is how much God loved us, dear friends! So we also must love each other” (1 John 4:11, ERV).

**Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–8. Do you see where the word “love” is written in these verses? Every time you read the word “love,” put your name there. Can the things about love be said about you? Ask Jesus to help you to have this love. God's Spirit will help you too. So, why not invite Him to live in your heart right now? Then He can help you be more loving. But you may need to make some changes first. What changes do you think the Spirit will ask you to make?**

## SELFISH HEARTS DESTROY FAMILIES (Philippians 2:3–5)

**“What if we stopped being selfish? What if our hearts were not full of pride? Then we will solve most of our problems in five minutes!”—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 119, adapted.**

We are sinners. What is the one thing that shows we are full of sin more than anything else? Our selfish hearts. We are born selfish. Look at small children. Their favorite word seems to be “Me, me, me!” By the time we are adults, we can be very selfish. Often, the place where we show our selfishness the most is in our homes.

But Jesus came to change our selfish hearts (Ephesians 4:24). The Bible promises us that selfishness does not need to control our lives. Jesus’ whole life is a perfect example. It shows us what it means to live with no selfishness. Here is a wonderful promise: The more we live as Jesus lived, the less selfish we will be (1 John 2:6)!

**Read the verses below. What do these verses tell us about living an unselfish life?**

**Philippians 2:3–5** \_\_\_\_\_

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**1 John 3:16–18** \_\_\_\_\_

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Read again what Ellen G. White wrote about selfish hearts. What did she say happens when we stop being selfish and proud? We can solve most of our problems very fast. That is important. What happens when we do not solve our problems? They turn our hearts mean and nasty. So, we must throw out selfishness (Proverbs 16:6). But we cannot do it ourselves. We need Jesus’ help. He invites us to come to the Cross. There, we must kneel in prayer, faith, and even tears. Then, we must give our hearts fully to Jesus. We must ask Him to wash us clean from our sins.

**How much time do you spend at the Cross fighting against the sin in your life? How does Matthew 7:16 help you to know if you need to spend more time there?**



**We are born selfish. Just look at small children. Their favorite word seems to be “Me, me, me!”**

**BE WILLING TO SERVE EACH OTHER (Ephesians 5:21)**

**What advice does Paul give us in Ephesians 5:21? How does our serving other people help us to have peace in the church? Why is it important that we serve each other at home too? Read Ephesians 5:22–6:9 for the answer.**



**When the truth changes our lives, we will show our families we love them.**

What is the meaning of the words written as “be willing to serve” in Ephesians 5:21, ERV? These words mean “to choose freely to help or care for someone.” Jesus always showed this important rule in His life (Matthew 20:26–28; John 13:4, 5; Philippians 2:5–8). All Jesus’ followers will show this important rule in their lives too (Ephesians 5:18). Our serving other people shows that God’s Spirit fills us (Ephesians 5:18). What leads us to serve other people? “Respect for Christ [Jesus]” (Ephesians 5:21, ERV). When we serve other people, we show them this important truth. Jesus’ love makes all people equal. No one is more special or less special than anyone else.

**A Rule to Live by in the Family.** Our family life shows exactly how much we live the truths we preach. When the truth changes our lives, we will show our families we love them. Family members must be willing to serve each other too. This behavior at home will make a big difference in the church.

In Ephesians 5:22–6:9, Paul talks about three different connections between people. The people in these connections are not equal to each other in the eyes of the community. Paul is not trying to show that the community’s view about people is right. Paul wants to show that these three connections will change when Christians freely choose to serve and care for each other.

**Why do you think that Paul always speaks first to church members who have very little power in their communities? This group includes wives, children, and slaves. Why does Paul tell each of these groups that they should be willing to serve people? Read Ephesians 5:22; Ephesians 6:1; and Ephesians 6:5 for the answer.**

Paul always talks to husbands, parents, and masters second. This second group has the most power in the community. Paul tells both groups to do more than the community expects of them. Paul’s advice must have surprised everyone in the church at the time. His advice helped members understand how to bring true peace and agreement in the church.

**A LIFE OF LOVE (Genesis 33:12–14)**

In the end, peace in the family depends on family members. It starts first with the husband and wife. They must be willing to show they care for each other. Bible history is filled with many sad stories. These stories show people who broke their promises to other people. The Bible also shows us many wonderful stories about loving and caring people. With God's help, these people kept their promises to their families and friends.

**Look at the stories about families in the verses below. What do you think some of these people did wrong? Why did some of the people in these stories show so much love for their families?**

**Parent-child love (Genesis 33:12–14; Exodus 2:1–10)** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Love between brothers (Genesis 37:17–28)** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Love between family members (Ruth 1:16–18; Ruth 2:11, 12, 20; Ruth 3:9–13; Ruth 4:10, 13)** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Love in marriage (Hosea 1:2, 3, 6, 8; Hosea 3:1–3)** \_\_\_\_\_

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Love is a promise that we make to another person. We make a promise when we get married. We promise to love our husband or wife more than we love any other human. We make a promise when we choose to adopt a child. We choose to love that child forever. When we love, we must be willing to serve and show we care. We must be willing to keep our promises to our loved ones too. Marriages and families need love in order to grow and be a success.

**What does Jesus' promise in Hebrews 13:5 mean to you? How does it change how you love and serve Him? How does Jesus' promise to you also change how you serve and love your husband or wife? Your children? The people in your church?**



**Love is a promise we make to another person. Marriages and families need love to grow and be a success.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Ellen G. White, “A Sacred [set apart as holy] Circle [a word picture for the family],” pages 177–180, in *The Adventist Home*; *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6, pages 236–238.

**Peace and Agreement: Our most important work.** “What is the most important work for Christians to do? They must show that there is peace and agreement in their families. . . .

“Families should work closely together. They should join together as one in their work in the home. Then both fathers and mothers, and sons and daughters, will be very helpful to other people outside their home too.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, page 37, adapted.

“What causes fighting in the family and church? The answer is: separation from Jesus. When we come near Jesus, we will come closer to each other. What helps us to have real peace and agreement in the church and our families? It is not our skill or power to solve problems. It is not our wise management either. Yes, these skills are important. We need these skills to solve many problems in the family and in the church. But what we need most is to join ourselves to Jesus. We need to become one with Him. Then we will have true peace and agreement in the church.”—Page 179, adapted.



When we come closer to Jesus, we will come closer to each other.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Talk about the things in your community that work against you having peace and agreement in your family. What can you do to protect your family from these things?
- ② Is there a family in your church right now that is broken? What can you do as a class to help this family?
- ③ We talked this week about serving other people. What does the Bible mean when it says we should be willing to serve? Are there wrong ways of serving other people? If yes, what are they? How can we be guilty of serving other people in the wrong way? What can we do to avoid this mistake in the future?
- ④ What are some of the ways we can show peace and agreement in our families? How can we use these ideas to make peace in the church too?