

The Family of God

Families are important. We spend both quality and quantity time as a family. Families are more than just investing time together. Family is the environment where children learn core values, and adults strengthen their values through spousal support. In Christian families, the goal is for family values to be what God desires for us.

Relationship with our spouse: Family members know us well. There is no pretending with those we live with 24/7. They know our blemishes, and yet in Christian families, we are loved unconditionally. We choose our spouse in anticipation of a lifetime of happiness. Achievement of happiness depends on a willingness to accept family members for who they are. Our spouse usually mirrors our core values but may have been blessed by God with different talents that complement the marriage. Our spouses keep us grounded when we get off track. They encourage us when we are down and don't let us get too full of ourselves when we take too much credit for success. Life has its ups and downs, but Christian couples support each other through whatever life throws our way because we know God works all things together for good (see Romans 8:28). We don't expect perfection but a caring attitude. Couples mutually pledge to be present for each other in good times and bad, sickness and health, and until death us do part. Family life focuses on mutual love and trust. *We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).*

Parental Role: Being a parent adds another dimension of love as we watch our children grow up. Children learn by observing what parents do, not what they say. They choose characteristics from each parent as they develop their way of life. Children make mistakes along the way, but we continue to love them. And, we make mistakes, too. *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).* At times children may drift away, and we pray they will come back to us because of our love for them. We welcome their quest for independence, but we know it is a lifetime work-in-progress. We parent with compassion and understanding, not conviction. We understand the context of our children's lives. We forgive, not because they deserve it, but because of the depth of our love for them. *Do everything in love (1 Corinthians 16:14).* We sacrifice for our children and share time, energy, and resources to help them achieve their goals. Parents give children space but are willing to help when assistance is needed. When we become grandparents, we especially enjoy watching our children in the parental role to the next generation.

God looks at us in much the same way as parents. God has hopes for us, and he wants us to succeed. God understands the challenges we are experiencing in our lives, and He knows our hearts. God loves us unconditionally, and He desires that we choose to live by His characteristics. God is ready to help us as needed and is waiting for us to ask. When we drift away, he longs for our return. God has made the ultimate sacrifice for us. God provides the example for us to follow and allows us to choose to follow Him. It is an honor to be part of the Family of God.

Thank God every night for the gift of your extended family. Family is truly a blessing. Model your earthly family after God's family life. *Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12-13). Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take (Proverbs 3:6).*

