

the **rock**

hand *in hand*





HAND IN HAND

The Reunion and the Family

Looking at the photos from the family reunion was like reading a history book about the generations of this family.

First there was the homestead of a great-grandfather where only a pecan tree now stood. The tree was both a marker and monument to the memory of the home that was now a horse farm. The Spanish moss that hung from the tree reminded the living of the great-grandfather's livelihood. He gathered and cured Spanish moss so that it could be sold to make

mattresses.

All of his descendants had great respect for this man. Surely his great-great-grandkids could make it since he had.

Then there was the tin-roofed shack that stood alone out in the backwoods, still home sweet home to a "cousin" who refused to leave this "poor" dwelling. This was her place. She stood, smiling a wide welcome and opening the door to her home for a relative. The obvious warm feelings melted away any fears. There was acceptance here.

One very kind photo pictured two women and one man hand in hand in front of the church that originally had been built and then

added on to by family members. Dressed in their Sunday best, they were celebrating their togetherness as family and as Christians. It was a celebration of love that would reach to include innumerable other members of the family, young and old, and that would last not just this Sunday, but through the weeks, months, years, and decades ahead.

The mother showing the pictures told how she almost felt a sense of loss coming back from that reunion. “There are a lot of people down home who have never left their roots. They have this wonderful support system for the young people. There are the older people who can provide a special kind of care, some extra loving. They can help correct the young people, discipline them without trying too hard. The young people can find understanding outside their own home. They find special bonds in this community, a sort of freedom. While some families have become so mobile and have gone off in different directions, their family members have stayed close together. They all live within walking distance of each other. In fact, they purposely build their homes close together. Several young people whose parents had been separated found a special security here. They were assured that they would always be members of this family and be at home here, that the family cares about what happens to them.”

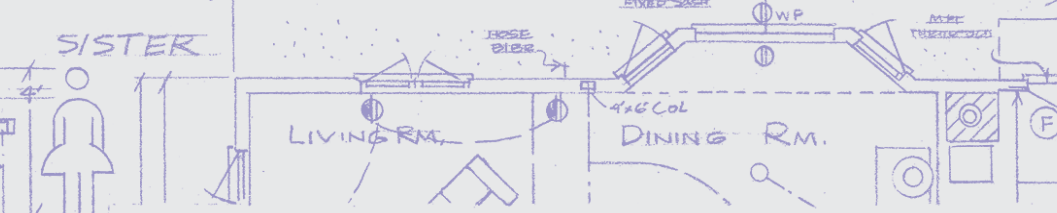
Other photos showed a special barbecue dinner, and the theme on the banner was the importance

of the family in the twenty-first century. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins were sitting around spending this special reunion time together. The story is told that one family member came up to another and said, “Aunt so-and-so wants you.” This guy was 50 years old, but he got up to see what this matriarch of the family wanted. He believed that no matter how old you get, you still respect those older than you.

Several photos showed a man who had watched his father work hard for someone else because of a lack of education. It was his boyhood dream to build his father a home. He would think about his dream as he plowed the farmland his dad owned. There was one part of the 90-acre stretch that was untillable because of the number of trees. This is where he and his cousins played. As a kid, he marked the trees in these woods—cherry, walnut, oak, pine—knowing that he would one day cut down these trees to build a house for his dad.

When this boy became a man he inherited this area of the farm. From the untilled fields he dug up enough flint rock for the walls of the home, and he and his sons cut down the very trees he had marked as a boy. Family members and other members of the church and community worked together to build this home where now all are welcome to come and to stay. Sticking together, always—that’s what the reunion and this family are all about.





FAMILY BLUEPRINT

IF you check out the beginning of everything in the Book of Genesis, you'll discover that Adam and Eve didn't just bump into each other on an evening stroll and decide to invent the family. The family was God's idea, carefully planned from the beginning of time. You may recall that things were less than perfect right from the start. But God put us in families for several good reasons.

1. That's My Dad Read Matthew 7:7-11.

a. Jesus often used familiar situations to make a spiritual point. What point was He trying to make in these verses?

b. What kinds of good gifts do fathers give their kids? Are we talking about designer wardrobes, big allowances, and unlimited snacks?

c. List three characteristics of God you discovered in this section of Scripture.
God is:

d. List three characteristics of earthly fathers.

e. What kinds of good gifts do you think God expects us to ask Him for?

2. The Other Side of the Coin Read Hebrews 12:5b-10.

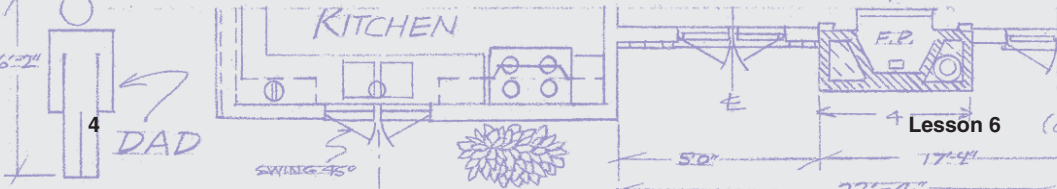
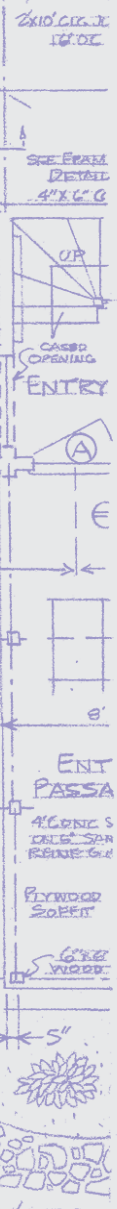
a. The hand that doles out your allowance also administers discipline! What does the Bible say discipline is evidence of?

b. Discipline really is a good and necessary thing! In what ways does God discipline us?

3. Stickin' Together Read Proverbs 18:24.

a. Why do you think God planned for families to stick together?

b. Spiritually speaking, who is the "friend" referred to in Proverbs 18:24?



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 7:7-11

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

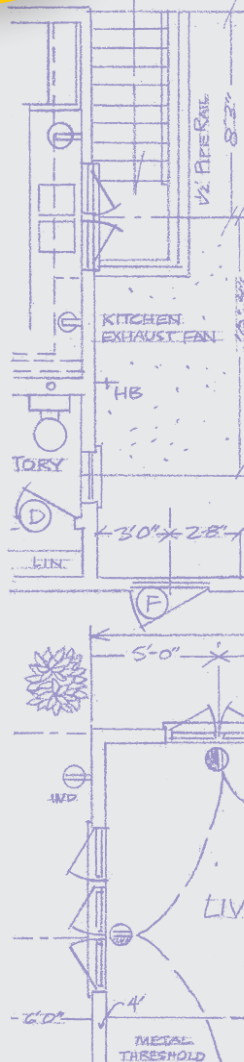
Hebrews 12:5b-10

^{5b}“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as a son.”

⁷Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! ¹⁰They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

Proverbs 18:24

One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.



START

10

17

14

13

22

19

GO THE
OTHER
WAY

8

5

23

6

SENTENCE STARTERS

A TRIVIA GAME FOR
YOUR WHOLE FAMILY

*How well do you know your family?
Probably not as well as you think.
Play this game to find out. You just
might be surprised by what you say
and what you hear while you play.*

Things You'll Need:

Paper and pencil for scorekeeping
Multicolor or multishape buttons for playing pieces (one per player)
A spinner (make one or borrow one from another game)

Instructions:

1. Take turns in the order of birthdays.
2. Begin at START and move clockwise from square to square. Use the spinner to determine how many spaces to move.
3. Note the number in the square you land on. Find the unfinished sentence it refers to, read it aloud, and complete the sentence in your own words.
4. The first player to finish one sentence from all five sections is the winner.

THE LAST

1. I remember
was w
2. I knew I
didn't w
3. I stood up for ano
4. I saved my allowa
5. I voluntarily admit
wrong was . . .

THE FIRST

11. I did
some
12. I adm
was .
13. my family believe
something difficu
14. anyone gave me
15. I was disciplined,

IF

- I were the you
21. my older b
 22. I felt like n
 23. I saw my c
 24. my older s
 25. I wanted to

RETURN
TO
START

18

2

9

24

1

11

20

SKIP
A
TURN

TIME

number getting into trouble when . . .
had to share something and what was when . . .
other kid was when . . .
reason for a present was . . .
wanted doing something

IF

- I were a parent and . . .
- my teenage son borrowed the car without asking, I'd . . .
 - my daughter was accused of cheating on a test, I'd . . .
 - my family planned a beach trip during a baseball game, I'd . . .
 - my son broke a neighbor's window, I'd . . .
 - I wanted to plan a special surprise for the family, I'd . . .

7

4

25

TIME

favor secretly for someone was . . .
knew I was wrong
what I could do
what it was . . .
what a hug was . . .
what I learned . . .

IF

- I were a parent and . . .
- my kids actually cleaned up their rooms, I'd . . .
 - my child asked for a pet, I would . . .
 - my spouse unjustly blamed the kids, I'd . . .
 - my kid didn't take care of his or her pet, I'd . . .
 - I wanted to treat my family at dinner, I'd . . .

TAKE
EXTRA
TURN

16

12

youngest kid in the family and . . .
brother wouldn't share, I'd feel . . .
no one really listened to me, I'd . . .
older brother stealing, I'd . . .
sister got blamed for something I did, I'd . . .
to do something special for my parents, I'd . . .

GO THE
OTHER
WAY

21

6

15

3

every day devos

FAMILY MATTERS

Did you ever wonder if when you were born, there was a mix-up at the hospital? How else could you have become a member of your sometimes strange family, right?

Though you may sometimes feel like that, there are lots of good things about belonging to a family. Let's take a look at some.

“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” John 13:34b

MONDAY Write a description of a perfect family. How does John 13:34b fit in with your idea of a perfect family?

TUESDAY “Blood is thicker than water.” Ask at least one family member to rephrase this expression. Read Proverbs 18:24 together and think of a time when you stood up for each other.

WEDNESDAY Think about all the things you appreciate about your family, and then tell them. For instance, “Meg, I’m glad you really listen to me when I talk.” How did this help you follow John 13:34b?

THURSDAY It’s not always easy to love your family. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Write down two qualities of love that you do show. Then write down one quality you still need to work on.

FRIDAY Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 again. Choose one quality of love and write down a specific way you can practice it today. For example, “I’ll be patient when Sara’s on her phone and not bug her.”

SATURDAY Design a giant card for your parents thanking them for their love and support.