

# FAMILIA

## WEEK 3 (HYBRID)

### BIG IDEA

In God's family we reconcile with each other.

### Bible

Ephesians 4:31-5:2; Colossians 1:21-22; Hebrews 12:14

## WHAT?

### POLL | This or That

- Welcome back to our series, *Familia*, where we're talking about the people we fight with more than anyone else — our families. Sometimes we fight with family over really important things, but I'd be lying if I said I never got into a fight over a completely *unimportant* difference of opinion.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have students stand up in the center of the room. Explain that you will read a series of "this or that" scenarios and they will walk to the left or right sides of the room to show which one they'd choose. If they wouldn't choose either, they can stay standing in the middle of the room. After each scenario, ask a few students why they chose that option. Give scenarios like . . .*
  - *Home-cooked meal or take-out?*
  - *Family road trip or family cruise?*
  - *Movie at home or movie in the theater?*
  - *Never do a chore again or get paid every time a sibling does a chore?*
  - *You always pick what's on TV or you always pick what's for dinner?*

### QUESTION | "What's the most unimportant thing your family has ever fought about?"

- **So what's the most unimportant thing your family has ever fought about?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- When we're fighting with our family, it can be so hard to find common ground sometimes, right? No matter how big or small the issue is, fights continue when we . . .
  - Think we're right.
  - Think everyone else is wrong.
  - Don't feel like we're being listened to or understood.
  - Don't want to hear others' points of views.
- When we're fighting with our families, understanding each other can sometimes be so difficult that it feels like we're speaking totally different languages.

## ACTIVITY | The Language of Family

- In this series, we're talking about *familia* — that's Spanish for "family," but we've been learning it in a few other languages too.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Open Google Translate on a device of your choice. If possible, mirror that device to your screen so students can see and hear it. Spend a few moments taking requests from your students about which language they want to see "family" translated into. For each translation you choose, play the audio of the pronunciation and practice saying it together. If students request a language you're unfamiliar with, take a moment to look up the countries in which it's spoken.*
- There are more than 7,000 languages spoken today. That means there are more than 7,000 ways to say "family," but there are also more than 7,000 ways to misunderstand, miscommunicate, and fail to understand each other.
- When we're fighting with our families, it can sometimes seem impossible to understand or be understood by each other. Today, let's see if we can find a path forward, even when that doesn't seem possible.

## SO WHAT?

### STORY | Talk about a time you refused to admit you were wrong.

- Sometimes, when we argue with others, we're fighting for what's right! But more often than not, we're actually just fighting for our own pride and ego.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a fight you had with a family member where you knew you were wrong, but refused to admit it. Share how your refusal to apologize, concede, or compromise impacted your relationship with the person you were fighting with.*
- Every family fights. Even if you have a friend whose family seems so perfect that you can't imagine them ever raising their voices at each other, I promise, they fight too. But the way we handle our fights with our family members is often not-so-great.
  - Maybe your fights get physical.
  - Or passive aggressive.
  - Or mean.
  - Or maybe your idea of "apologizing" is to just keep your distance until they get tired of being mad at you.
- You're always going to have fights and disagreements with your family — that's not going to change, but what can change is how you handle yourself in those moments.
  - Will you be the kind of person who fights only for yourself? When you let selfishness, anger, unforgiveness, and bitterness build up in you, it's like road kill on the side of a hot desert road — eventually, it's going to get really rotten.
  - Or will you be the kind of person who fights for your family? Will you do what it takes to address the ugly, painful, difficult things before they begin to rot?

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
  - **What's something your family always fights about?**
  - **What are some not-so-great ways you sometimes handle yourself during a fight with family? Why isn't that approach working?**

## SCRIPTURE | Ephesians 4:31-5:2

- Every family has its own set of unique unhealthy patterns. It's not easy to fight well with our families, but the Bible is full of guidance on how to love each other well — we just have to be willing to apply that at home.
- The New Testament of the Bible (that's the part that was written after Jesus came to earth) is full of letters from early church leaders to the family of God.
  - People like Paul wrote them to help Jesus-followers learn how to live and love like Jesus would.
  - These letters communicated a lot of important things, like what God is like and what Jesus came to do. But a lot of these letters are simply filled with advice on how to get along with each other.
  - One of these letters is the book of Ephesians — a letter Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Ephesians 4:31-5:2.*
- Paul gave us a list of things to get rid of. How many of these things have you done or felt toward your family?
  - Bitterness.
  - Rage and anger.
  - Fighting.
  - Talking badly about each other.
  - Being cruel.
- And he said to choose a few different things instead. I wonder what it would look like if you chose to give your family more . . .
  - Kindness.
  - Compassion.
  - Forgiveness.
  - Love.
- But there's a really important idea Paul communicates here. The reason he tells us to do these things is because God has already done them for us through Jesus. Just like God forgave us, Paul tells us to forgive others.

## BUT WHAT ABOUT . . . ?

- But maybe you're thinking, "You talk about forgiveness like it's easy, but you don't know my situation." Maybe for you, your family has hurt you in ways that are much more significant than taking your AirPods or annoying you constantly. For you, maybe . . .
  - You once made a huge mistake and are really hurt that your family doesn't trust you like they used to.
  - A parent walked out on your family, and you hate that they left you or never said they're sorry.
  - A relative is struggling with addiction or their mental health, or is in prison, and you're so angry at them for not being perfect or there for you.
  - Or maybe a loved one has hurt you, or continues to hurt you. Maybe you've been abused physically, emotionally, or sexually by someone who is supposed to love and care for you.
- If any of these situations sound familiar to you, here's what I need you to know about this passage.
  - **IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU.** While there are things in this passage you can learn from and apply, Paul didn't write this letter about your situation. He was writing to a group of adults who were fighting about much more ordinary things — not young people who were hurt by the people who were supposed to keep them safe.
  - **IT'S NOT ABOUT ABUSE.** If you've been abused or deeply hurt, or you're currently in a situation where you are in danger, please talk to one of the adults in the room before you leave tonight. The Bible is not telling you to let the person who is hurting you

continue to hurt you. That's not what love or forgiveness is.

- **IT ISN'T MEANT TO SHAME YOU.** In situations of deep hurt or pain, forgiveness isn't easy or simple. The greater the wound, the longer it takes to heal. If you're struggling to forgive someone because of something really difficult you experienced, God isn't angry or disappointed in you, but is full of kindness, compassion, and love for you.
- But if your typical family fight is about something more manageable than these things, I hope you hear what Paul says. Whatever is causing fighting, drama, and hurt feelings in your family right now, you can choose:
  - Kindness instead of cruelty.
  - Compassion instead of rage.
  - Forgiveness instead of bitterness.
  - Love instead of indifference.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
  - **On a scale of 1-5, how big do you think your family's problems are? When your family's problems are really big, where could you find extra help or support? When would you know it's time to ask for help?**
  - **\* How do you think we can tell the difference between a typical family conflict and something more unhealthy or dangerous?**

## SCRIPTURE | Colossians 1:21-22

- But remember how Paul said we should forgive each other because God has forgiven us? Paul talks about this more in a letter to another family of believers — the Colossians. To this group of Jesus-followers, Paul doesn't just talk about forgiveness. He talks about reconciliation.
  - Reconciliation means to make things right with someone. It's about repairing a damaged relationship.
  - Reconciliation is related to forgiveness, but it's not the same. Forgiveness is something you can do even if the person who hurt you isn't sorry, but reconciliation requires both of you to do your part.
  - Reconciliation doesn't always mean a relationship goes back to the way it was, but it does mean amends have been made, even if the relationship look different afterward.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Colossians 1:21-22.*
- It might sound challenging, or even impossible, to forgive and make things right with our families when they've hurt us, but Jesus isn't asking us to do something he hasn't already done for us.
  - Because of our sin, you and I have done so much to cause God hurt and pain, but God doesn't react to our hurtfulness with rage, cruelty, or retaliation.
  - Instead, Jesus came to be near us, invite us into his family, restore our relationship with God, and reconcile with us — even though he didn't need to. We were the only ones causing harm and deserving blame.
- In our families, there's usually much less of a contrast. Most of the time, everyone involved in a fight is a little bit responsible. We're all guilty of acting in ways that were hurtful and cruel, which is why Paul's advice is so important.
- We can forgive because we were forgiven. We can reconcile with our families because Jesus reconciled with us so we could join his family. That's why, **in God's family, we reconcile with each other.**

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
  - **What do you think it means to "reconcile" with someone? How did Jesus do that for us?**
  - \* **If a person were in an abusive situation, how might it be dangerous for them to try to reconcile with the person hurting them? What do you think God would want that person to know?**
  - \* **When is it easy for you to reconcile with a family member? When is it difficult?**

## 3 WAYS TO RECONCILE

- So now what? How do we get rid of our tendencies to be bitter and angry, to pick fights, to talk badly about people, or to be cruel? How do we learn to choose kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and love instead? How, exactly, can we reconcile when we've been fighting?
  - **START WITH FORGIVENESS.** Forgiveness is the foundation of reconciliation. We can't reconcile until we're willing to let go of our bitterness and choose forgiveness instead. But remember:
    - It's okay if forgiveness takes time. God knows you're only human.
    - You can forgive even when the person isn't sorry. Forgiveness isn't a gift you give them — it's a gift you give yourself, because holding onto bitterness won't hurt anyone but you.
  - **AIM FOR UNITY.** "Unity" doesn't mean you have to agree with someone about everything. Unity is possible even if you disagree because "unity" does not mean "uniformity." Just because your family member has a different perspective than you doesn't mean you can't find common ground. At the very least, here are some things you can try to agree on:
    - The person you're fighting with is loved and made in God's image.
    - Neither of you are perfect. You've both messed up in the past.
    - But you're family — and you want to act like it.
  - **BEGIN A CONVERSATION.** When you're fighting with a family member, quit overthinking it. Just start somewhere. It doesn't have to be a five-hour conversation — it might even be a text message. If it helps, write down your ideas and thoughts before going into the conversation. And if you're afraid to have a conversation because you're not sure what to say or how it will go . . .
    - Ask God to help guide the conversation and remind you you're not alone.
    - Remember you can have more talks in the future! You don't have to solve it all in one conversation.
    - Don't be discouraged if reconciliation doesn't happen immediately. Remember, the bigger the wound, the longer it takes to heal. Hang in there.
- Through Jesus, we can learn from the ultimate act of reconciliation. Jesus . . .
  - Forgave us before we even asked him to.
  - Reached out to us before we could even admit we'd done him wrong.
  - Reconciled us to God through his life, death, and resurrection.
  - Invited us into his family.
- Imagine how different our relationships at home would look if we decided to do our best to make things right with our family, no matter . . .
  - How broken the relationship feels.
  - How disappointed we are in our family's past choices.

- How long we've been fighting.
- If we've forgotten what we were even fighting about in the first place.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
  - **Read Hebrews 12:14. What are some specific things you can do to live more peacefully with your family?**
  - \* **How do we know when we've done all we can to be peaceful in a conflict? What should we do when we can't do anything else?**
  - **This week, who's someone in your family you need to reconcile with? How will you do that?**