

Family Matters: Surviving & Thriving at Home Series

Building Family Bonds

Overview: Focus on why families are special, as well as challenging. Through the story of Joseph and his brothers, you'll help teenagers explore the concepts of loyalty, forgiveness, and gratitude in families.

Supplies: You'll need Bibles, Hula-Hoop plastic hoops, a basketball and court (or a rubber ball and trash cans).

1. Opening

Say: **When it comes to our families, we all want that mythical togetherness we think other people have, or that we sometimes see with TV families that seem “perfect.” But togetherness is not always what it’s cracked up to be...**

Quickly form two teams and play a simple game of basketball with a twist: All of a team’s players must stand together inside one Hula-Hoop, forcing them to move and work as one unit. If you don’t have access to a gym, set up your own court using two large trash cans at opposite ends of an open area, and use a beach, foam, or rubber ball. Teams can consist of as many people as can fit inside a hoop. Play until one team scores 10 points (or some other arbitrary score).

After the game, ask the players: **What was fun and not-so-fun about the togetherness you just experienced?** Then ask the “spectators” (if you have any nonplayers): **Did that look like something you’d like to be a part of? Why or why not?**

Then say: **For some families, sports is a way to experience togetherness. Others enjoy large gatherings over special meals. Think of a recent holiday you spent with your extended family: Relatives are in your face, crowding your stuff, and monopolizing the bathroom. Family get-togethers can be as fun and relaxing as a hammock in a highway. Togetherness has its pluses and minuses...**

Explain that although every family is different, certain elements are the same.

Ask for a show of hands in response to these questions:

- **Who has a crazy uncle with a bad comb-over who makes embarrassing sounds at the dinner table?**
- **Who has a cousin who always seems to break your stuff?**
- **Who has an aunt with a unibrow who lies about her age?**
- **Who has a brother or sister who might be an alien?**

2. Bible Connection

Say: **Families are flawed, made up of imperfect people, and that just might be part of what makes them so special. “Family” is a place to find acceptance, forgiveness, and loyalty—despite our mistakes and**

shortcomings. And our family is intended by God to be a kind of boot camp for learning how to love others, especially when those others are right up in your grill...

Read aloud **Genesis 45:1-15**, then say: **Talk about a stressful family reunion! Joseph annoyed his brothers so much that they actually sold him into slavery. Don't get any ideas... After many years of separation from his loved ones, Joseph knew the value of family, and he cherished his brothers despite what they'd done to him.**

Tell a personal story of a difficulty you faced in your family, how you overcame it, and how you saw Jesus making "beauty out of ugly" in that situation.

Then ask:

- **What would you miss most if you suddenly were taken away from your family, like Joseph was?**
- **What are the most important tips for getting along with your family?**

3. Digging Deeper

Read aloud **Proverbs 23:22-25**, then explain that one way to make family members feel appreciated is to be the sort of person they can be proud of, avoiding trouble and being respectful. But, of course, we can't become that sort of person by simply trying harder to be better. We need the strength and integrity of Jesus to flow through us, and that happens only when we stay closely connected to him. Jesus said that "if we abide in him, and his words abide in us," we can do anything. And that includes setting a good example in our family.

4. Closing

Have students find a partner and close in prayer, thanking Jesus for their families.