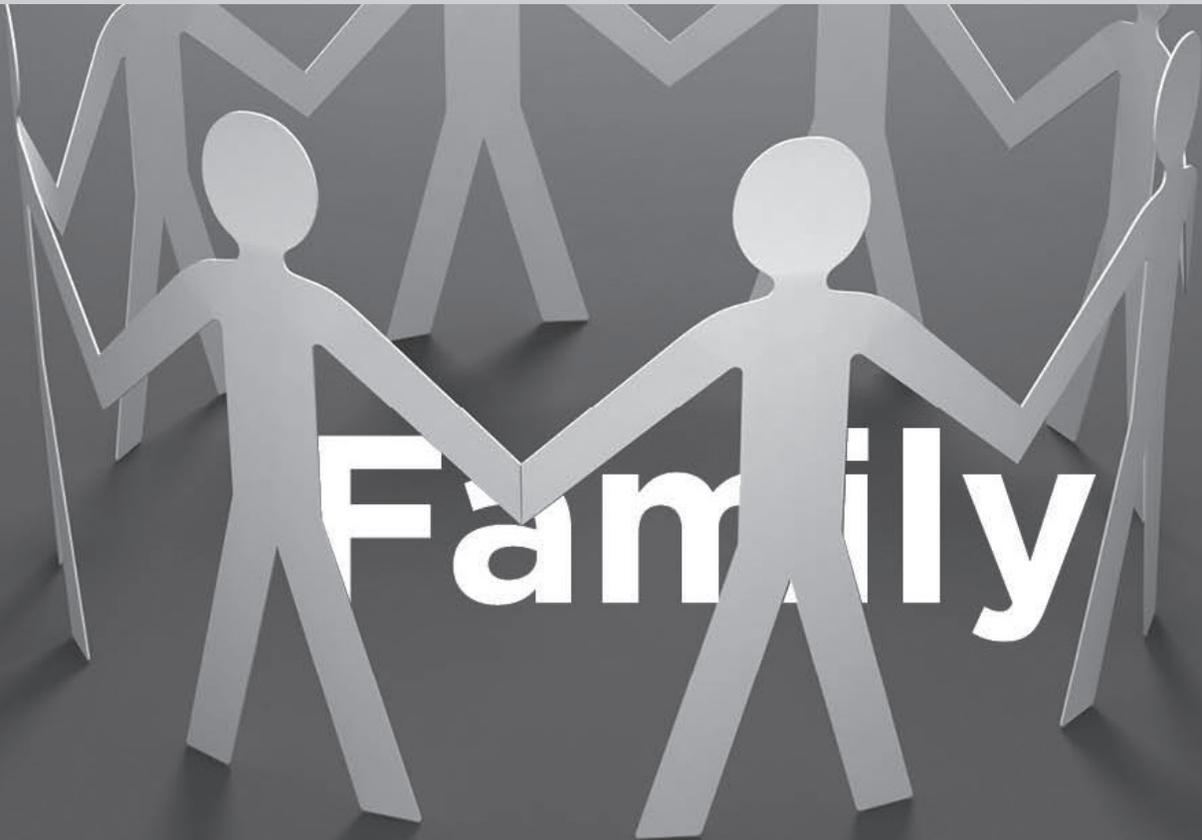


PENTECOSTAL LIFE

SMALL GROUP Facilitator's Guide



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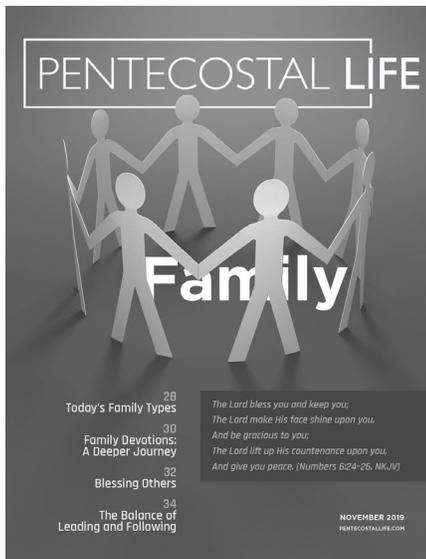
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*The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26, NKJV)*

NOVEMBER 2019
PENTECOSTALLIFE.COM

SMALL GROUP Facilitator's Guide

Welcome to *Pentecostal Life's* small group study, *Family*. Thank you for providing leadership for this four-session study. Your enthusiasm for the study will help to inspire and educate your group members to learn about and appreciate the challenge of practicing holiness in your personal life.



Family — Small Group Overview

Authors: Rachel Coltharp, Chad Flowers, James A. Littles Jr., Rachel Lugo

Session:	Session Name / <i>Pentecostal Life</i> article:
Session One	Today's Family Types
Session Two	Family Devotions: A Deeper Journey
Session Three	Blessing Others
Session Four	The Balance of Leading and Following

HOW TO REACH US

Pentecostal Life
36 Research Park Court
Weldon Spring, MO 63304
Phone: 1.636.229.7842
Email: kmiddleton@upci.org, main@upci.org
Web: www.pentecostallife.com

OUR VISION

The *Pentecostal Life* in every Pentecostal home

OUR MISSION

To publish a Pentecostal magazine that strengthens the hands of Pentecostal pastors, encourages and challenges Pentecostal believers, and reaches beyond the doors of Pentecostal churches

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Single Subscriptions (Canada) \$66.00 2-year
Single Subscriptions (Foreign) \$44.00
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Small Group Facilitator's Guide

Launching the Study

This study focuses on the family. It comes from the four ENGAGE articles in the November 2019 issue of the *Pentecostal Life*. Every member of your group will need a copy of the magazine. As a leader, you will need the magazine and the complimentary downloadables from pentecostallife.com.

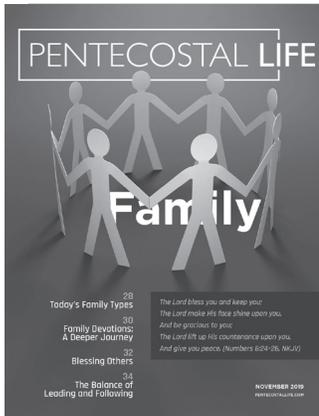
Before the Study

- Pray that you and the members of the group will be ready to receive what God wants to reveal to them through this study.
- Make sure your group size is small enough to encourage interaction by all participants; if it is too large, consider breaking up into several study groups.
- Set up a circular area where all participants have a seat that allows them to see each other.
- Place an extra chair in the circle to remind the group of the evangelistic nature of the study group. The group members can be encouraged to bring visitors and to pray for their salvation.
- As the facilitator, you should read the four ENGAGE articles to become familiar with the scope of the study.
- Each week, read the discussion questions and think through the answers you anticipate will be given. Prepare to lead the conversation and make notes on the direction you will take.
- Make certain each member of the study group purchases or has access to the November 2019 issue of the *Pentecostal Life* magazine. *Pentecostal Life* is available in single or bundle subscriptions at pentecostallife.com.
- Each week, instruct your study group members to read the appropriate ENGAGE article for the following week's discussion.
- Make a copy of the Study Guide for each student. They, as well as this Facilitator's Guide, are available as a download at pentecostallife.com in both Word document and PDF formats.

During the Study

- **Focus.** It is easy for small group discussions to veer away from the goal of the study. Gently encourage group members back to the question at hand if this happens.
- **Include.** Ask specific questions of those who are more hesitant to participate to encourage them to join the discussion.
- **Pray.** As appropriate, pray for the members of the group who are struggling.

SESSION ONE



Today's Family Types By Chad Flowers

Family "food for thought"

One hundred million Americans today have a step-relationship, either a step-parent, a step-child, or a step-sibling. That's one-

third of the United States population.

Half of us will have a non-traditional family relationship at some point in our lives.

One-third of new weddings will give birth to a blended family, whether by death, divorce, or someone with a child out of wedlock and now marrying someone else who is not the biological parent.

Two-thirds of couples in blended families will end up in divorce.

As a pastor, I have observed these statistics come to life within our local congregation.

The Twenty-First-Century Culture of Families

We live in a culture where divorce is prevalent, and non-traditional families are becoming more common. Nobody carries a childhood dream to be part of a non-traditional family, yet one out of three eventually find themselves in one. And this cultural phenomenon has far-reaching effects, because what is happening today sets a precedent for tomorrow. Thus the objective of the lesson is to familiarize us with these family types, because the people we are ministering to fall into these categories:

- The Traditional Family (nuclear family)—a mother and father raising one or more biological children.

- Single-Parent Families—one parent raising one or more children.
- Extended Families—at least two or more adults related by blood or marriage living together under the same roof, maybe due to financial difficulties.
- Childless Families—a married couple in any age range without children for a variety of reasons.
- Blended Families—a two-parent home with one or more children, not all biologically related, coming together to make one of a variety of configurations of step-families.
- Grandparent Families—a home in which grandparents are the primary caregivers for their grandchild(ren).

The Complexity and Ambiguity of Today's Families

According to Ron Deal's *The Smart Step-Family*, divorce doesn't end a family; it simply reorganizes it. There are sixty-seven configurations of step-families. For instance, in some situations there are four or five adults trying to parent even more children, employing different ideas about truth and value systems—a perfect breeding ground for postmodernism. Absolute truth with non-negotiables is easily rejected by teenagers and young adults today because they've grown up with a plethora of belief systems and values. This is one reason why combating divorce and building healthy families is a church responsibility!

Complexity brings on stress, relationships become complex, and it's no wonder that two-thirds of remarriages end in divorce. The people coming through our church doors from one of the above-listed family types may be facing many issues. One of these is ambiguity because there is no definite identity. Children are dealing with serial transitions and dealing with all of this produces a fear of marriage and family relationships in the next generation.

SESSION ONE (CONT.)

Call to Action

As the church, we cannot afford to ignore this negative view of marriage and family due to divorce, remarriage, and re-divorce. If we are going to reverse situations involving divorce and re-divorce, we have to foster healthy marriages. The revival and growth we have experienced testifies to these statistics. As the twenty-first-century Apostolic church, we must open our doors to people in these situations and offer hope and healing.

Paul admonished the church at Colossae: “As the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a

complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful” (Colossians 3:12–15, NKJV). Perhaps your church can offer divorce care, active demographic-focused ministries, and family-enrichment classes, or even small groups for providing new venues for guests fitting within these family types to become part of the body of Christ. **PL**

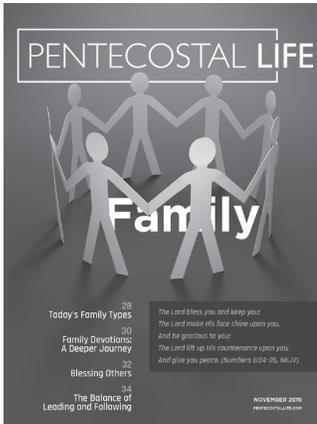
CHAD FLOWERS

Pastor | Emmanuel Pentecostal Church | Mesquite, Texas
Licensed Professional Counselor

SESSION TWO

Family Devotions: A Deeper Journey

Rachel Lugo



Our family was driving home from church. That night my sermon text had been from the Book of Judges, with the focus being Gideon. My children,

ages fourteen, eleven, and seven, were discussing the sermon, saying how amazing it was that they had never before heard of Gideon. It was my turn to be amazed. I knew they had heard of Gideon! They had faithfully attended Sunday school since the age of two. I had personally taught them hundreds of devotions. They had listened to numerous *Adventures in Odyssey*, *Paws and Tales*, and *Jungle Jam* audio dramas that included the story of Gideon.

What had gone wrong? Where had we failed as parents and ministers? Then I remembered something important. Humans have selective, forgetful memory and children are no exception when it comes to that fact. I have listened to, and forgotten the specifics of more sermons, lessons, and devotions than I will ever preach or teach, yet I still grow. Why? Because, even though I cannot remember the specifics of what was taught, the concepts, principles, and life-changing power of God's Word that I continually heard are rooted inside of me.

So how do we communicate the Word of God with its principles and guidance to our children in a way they will not forget (Proverbs 22:6)? Our kids are growing up in a culture where they are continually inundated with advertising, agendas, and entertainment that attempt to arrest their attention, mold their ideology, and predetermine their future. As parents, we do not have to respond in fear, but we must respond equipped.

We can equip ourselves with tools such as devotions for both kids and parents, audio dramas that teach biblical principles, biblically-based videos and websites, Bible quizzing, Sunday school lesson take-homes, and much more. Variety and options are important, due to different learning styles, varying ages of children, and full schedules. If your plan is too selective and rigid, it is easier for your schedule to get disrupted. There are many devotion options that work both at home and on the go.

We must also be equipped with prayer. Prayer is the one tool every person has that cannot be taken away and has immeasurable impact. (See Philippians 4:6-7; Ephesians 6:1-18.) When our children are young, it may seem impossible to get time away to pray, but maybe getting away isn't the goal. One morning, in the midst of frustration, the Lord spoke very clearly to me about this. I was kneeling down in my living room trying to pray, and, as usual, the interruptions were getting out of hand. My two boys were doing everything in their power to get my attention. One was lying over my back talking into my ear, and the other was trying to lift my head and look into my eyes, all while I was praying aloud. We had discussed (multiple times) that I was talking to Jesus and they needed to stop interrupting me. By the time I was finished, I was pretty sure the entire process had not been worth it.

Over the next few days, the Lord began to nudge me that I should not try to get the kids to leave me alone. I was baffled! How was I to pray with them all over me? With continual instruction from my very patient Savior, I began to ask the boys to join me. At first they didn't want to pray, but as God's presence would fill the room, one boy would come to lie over my back and

SESSION TWO (CONT.)

the other would lay his head in my lap. They wanted to be included in what I was doing, and when they felt God's presence, they wanted to be in it. Many times, we would finish with a song of praise and some dancing around to rejoice together, while other times they would wander away and play quietly until I finished.

My kids are older now, but I still make sure that I have personal prayer times where they can hear me. Children learn to pray and recognize God's presence by listening to our prayers. Your children may not remember all the words you prayed, but they will never forget the presence of God or what they felt when you prayed for them.

Let's return to our family discussion in the van. It hit me square in the face, even with all the devotions, audio dramas, sermons, lessons, VBS weeks, children's rallies, and Bible quizzing that my children had been involved in, nothing could replace the pure Word of God.

Immediately, we shelved the devotions we were working through and started all three kids on a new mission; they each would read through the Bible (our seven-year-old on a children's age-appropriate Bible). I was expecting some push back and whining, but it didn't happen. They read every morning and enjoyed the details that were filling in the gaps for many Bible stories they already knew. It wasn't a chore, but a revelation. One of my sons wanted to discuss the "back stories" that he had been unaware of that went with the stories from devotions he had heard.

I realized that the methods we had equipped ourselves with to teach our children had in turn equipped them

to love the Bible. They didn't view the Scriptures as unfamiliar, ancient, or strange territory, but as a journey deeper into an already familiar place. They didn't begrudge the time spent in reading the Bible, because they had already developed a pattern of making time for devotions. What began as a journey of parents teaching children, transformed into a family tradition of studying, learning, and growing in God together.

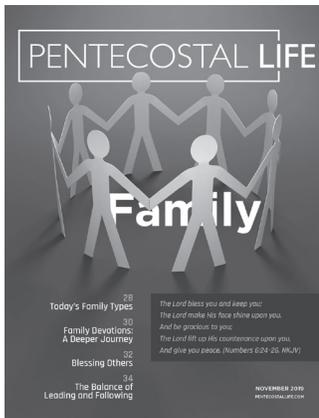
Every day doesn't follow the plan we have made for it, and flexibility is often required for success. Find what works for your family to incorporate prayer and devotions. Ask God to show you what will work best with your situation for the season you are in. No matter what method you choose, having devotions and prayer will draw you closer together and closer to Jesus.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:7-11 NKJV) **PL**

RACHEL LUGO

Pastoral Staff | Newark UPC | Steven Beardsley
Children's Ministries Director | New Jersey-Delaware District | UPCJ

SESSION THREE



Blessing Others James A. Littles Jr., PhD

Some of the most fulfilling times in a person's life are when they can exclaim, "I was made for this!" At that moment, time seems to have little meaning; the pleasure

of the creative activity pushes everything else to the background. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls this experience a "flow moment," a moment where a person experiences complete concentration, clarity, and sense of internal reward. At that moment, the person's skills and challenges they face provide the perfect conditions for creativity and happiness.

All of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:8-9, NKJV)

Followers of Christ have the liberty to experience the "I-was-made-for-this" feeling in every close relationship. Accepting the call to die to self and live in Christ puts down the neurotic, self-centered approach to relationships. The call puts an end to speaking evil and criticism as the apostle explained in 1 Peter 3:9. The Spirit transforms disciples from the inside out. The mind is renewed, and the heart carries the imprint of God's ways. The mouth will speak out of this new, ever-growing reality.

Peter knew his readers would experience evil and anger. Jesus had taught him and his classmates this basic discipleship principle: the world will hate Jesus' followers even as the world hated Him (John 17:14).

Toward the end of his life, the apostle called for his fellow believers to be a different kind of people, a people in sharp contrast to the world around them. Disciples can have a unified mind in close relationships that orients them away from personal rights toward the good in others. This kind of love ignites familial relations, softens the heart, and finds pleasure in humble courteousness toward others.

Flow happens. Time stops. Purposeful living overwhelms all other sensations in life. Who would not want to live this way?

Just as the high priest's office carried the responsibility of blessing others (Numbers 6:23-27), the new royal priesthood gifts members with Heaven-ordained words of blessings. Paul modeled this blessing potential in most of his letters. For example, Paul started Philippians with thanksgiving for the faithful gifts in the believers (1:2-8), called for even deeper dimensions of joy (1:25-26) and freedom from terror (1:28). He ended the epistle with blessings of provision, fellowship, and renewed outpouring of God's grace (4:19-23). While Paul personally experienced the deprivations of prison bars (1:12-13) and the potentially painful rejection of some other leaders (1:14-18) during the writing, he could not be pulled away from the call to bless others. Paul demonstrated his ability to bless others in the middle of the most severe of circumstances. Paul lived in the zone of blessings.

You can follow Peter and Paul's examples to live out your call to bless others by follow a few steps:

- Remember and celebrate the wonder of God's forgiving and loving grace in your life. Disciples

SESSION THREE (CONT.)

can daily release themselves to overwhelming thanksgiving for God's loving care and invitation to new life.

- Seek understanding for those you encounter. What gifts does the person possess? What situations may be hindering their blessings? What brings them the greatest joy? How might you serve them in their ministry situation? Start with close relationships such as a husband's care for his wife (1 Peter 3:7). Give honor for the blessings one already sees in the other person's life.
- Share the thanksgiving of blessings with the other person as Paul did in Philippians. Go beyond telling someone how blessed and honored you are to know them to identifying specific blessings you see. If you cannot see blessings in the other person, then go back to the previous step and pray for better spiritual vision. Even the person who disturbs the disciple most has the image of God in their life, so look deeper for that blessed spark.
- Pray for increased blessings in the other person's life. These blessings will begin with increasing the work that God has already started in them. Listen to the Spirit for the next season of blessing for their life.
- Find appropriate ways to share those blessings and prayers with the person. Tell children as they go out the door to school or work. Squeeze a loved one's

hand while taking a walk and telling them of a new blessing you see in their life. Write a letter or post a note on the refrigerator, lunch box, or rearview mirror to be discovered later. Send a text message of blessing.

- Believe what you say. Pray for increased faith for the courage to see blessings rather than prison bars.
- Repeat each step as you grow in your call to bless others.

I pray a blessing on you, your family, ministry team, coworkers, and classmates.

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace. (Numbers 6:24–26, NKJV)*

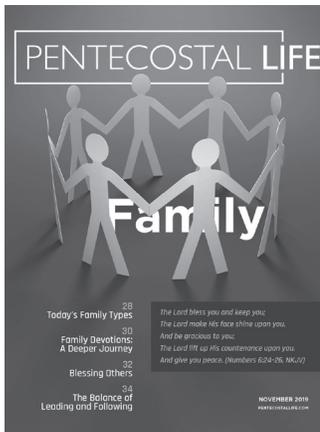
I pray you will make the choice to pass on the blessings to someone near you today. You were made for this!

I pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. **PL**

JAMES A. LITTLES JR., PHD

Discipleship Ministries | North Cities UPC | Garland, Texas
Evangelist | UPCI

SESSION FOUR



The Balance of Leading and Following

By Rachel Coltharp

Who am I following, and who is following me? These are among the most important questions we can ask ourselves. Steps lead to destinations and therefore must be chosen wisely.

Leading and following are two steps in the dance of influence. In his statement "Follow me as I follow Christ," the apostle Paul noted this choreography. He could lead, because he was being led. Our steps are directed by Paul, and his steps were directed by Christ.

In the family unit, each member is involved in both leading and following. Parents lead children, who in turn lead each other, and when fully grown become parents themselves. From the baby basket to the casket, we dance in step: follow, lead, follow, lead.

The Importance of Disciplines

First Timothy 4:7 (NKJV) says, "Exercise yourself toward godliness." Disciplines are the ties that hold us upright until we are strong enough to stand alone. They are the exercises we do to build our mental, emotional, and spiritual muscles. They train us to do what we could not do on our own.

At first, we merely mimic what we see, but as we mature, we internalize the values of our actions. *We become what we do.* Spiritual and physical disciplines become habits and fasten us to wisdom. Discipline trains us. That training brings order to chaos. Respectful actions lead us to become respectful people. It is a double-edged truth: do well and harvest blessing, do wrong and harvest pain. Scripture warns us to avoid foolish and wicked people, lest our behavior be corrupted by their influence.

"The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray" (Proverbs 12:26, NKJV).

"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits'" (I Corinthians 15:33, NKJV).

Respect

Respect cannot be demanded. It is earned. In order to be respectable, we must act in a manner worthy of respect. Our thoughts are robed in our words. Disrespectful words reflect shoddy character. Bragging and boasting reflect either an inflated estimation of self-worth or a prideful desire to be admired. In either case, the show-off loses the respect of others. If we follow those who are constantly preening and praising themselves publicly, we lead those who follow us down a path of self-idol worship.

Authority

Authority is given for the purpose of caretaking and training, never for bullying or pushing others around. It is to be used wisely. Ephesians 6:4 instructs parents how to use their God-given authority. They are to provide a safe family environment and to parent their children the way God parents His children. It warns parents not to use their authority and power over the child to exasperate them beyond what they can take. Far too many adults have no confidence in authority figures because of the way they were ill-used as children. Blessed is the child being led by a Christ-led parent!

Conclusion

As leaders (and everyone is leading someone), it is our responsibility to always point those following us toward Christ. When John the Baptist's followers were concerned that Jesus was surpassing John in popularity, he gave them words of wisdom: "He must

SESSION FOUR (CONT.)

increase, I must decrease.” His respectful attitude led his followers away from their emotionally driven angst and toward the big picture—that God’s will is bigger than ours. **PL**

RACHEL COLTHARP

Pastor’s Wife | First Apostolic Church | Aurora, Illinois

