

29 December 2024
Sunday after Christmas
Family life

Zechariah 8:3-6
Psalm 128
Col. 3:12-21
Luke 2:41-52

"Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart." Luke 2:51

As we gather in the Sunday after Christmas, the focus shifts from the nativity scene to a significant aspect of our faith: family life. The family is not only the foundation of society but also the setting in which faith, love, and values are nurtured. The story of Jesus growing up in a family reminds us that God values the family as a space for growth, learning, and love. Today, we reflect on the Scriptures - Zechariah 8:3-6, Psalm 128, Colossians 3:12-21, and Luke 2:41-52 - to understand what it means to live faithfully as families. These passages offer insights into God's vision for family life, highlighting its joys, challenges, and spiritual significance.

1. Family Life is God's Dwelling Place - Zechariah 8:3-6

Zechariah paints a vision of a restored Jerusalem where families thrive, and the presence of God is evident: *"This is what the Lord says: 'I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City.'" (Zechariah 8:3).* This prophecy is not just about a city but about communities and families filled with God's presence. The images of old men and women sitting in safety and children playing in the streets symbolize peace and harmony within families.

God desires to dwell in our families, filling them with His peace and joy. A family grounded in faith becomes a place where all generations experience love and security. Imagine a home where God's presence is central, much like a lamp that illuminates every corner of a room. Such families shine as examples of God's kingdom on earth. Let us invite God into our homes, making family life a space for prayer, love, and reconciliation. Just as God restored Zion, He can restore and strengthen our families.

2. Family Life is Blessed When Rooted in God - Psalm 128

Psalm 128 offers a vision of a blessed family: *"Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him." (Psalm 128:1).* This psalm emphasizes that families flourish when they are rooted in the fear of the Lord. The blessings extend to every aspect of life—work, relationships, and generations to come. The imagery of a fruitful vine and olive shoots illustrates the vitality and growth of a family centred on God. A God-centred family experiences blessings that go beyond material wealth. It finds joy in relationships, peace in challenges, and hope for the future. Consider a tree planted by streams of water. It grows strong, bearing fruit in every season. Similarly, a family grounded in God's word will thrive despite life's challenges. Let us build our families on the

foundation of God's word. Simple practices like family prayers, reading Scripture together, and living out God's commandments can transform our homes into places of blessing.

3. Family Life Requires Love and Patience – Col. 3:12-21

Paul provides practical guidance for family relationships, emphasizing virtues like compassion, kindness, humility, and patience. He calls for mutual respect and love within families: *"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* (Col. 3:13). The passage highlights roles within the family - husbands, wives, children, and parents - and stresses love as the bond that holds everything together. Paul's words remind us that family life, though rewarding, is not without challenges, requiring constant effort and grace. Love and patience are essential for healthy family relationships. They create an environment where every member feels valued and understood. Think of a family as a musical ensemble. Each member plays a unique role, and harmony is achieved when everyone listens, adapts, and contributes with love. Let us strive to embody the virtues Paul describes. Apologizing, forgiving, and encouraging one another are small but powerful steps toward building a Christ-like family.

4. Family Life is a Space for Growth and Faith - Luke 2:41-52

The story of young Jesus in the temple offers a glimpse into His family life. Despite being the Son of God, Jesus grew up in a family and learned obedience: *"Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart."* (Luke 2:51). This passage underscores the importance of families as places of growth, both spiritually and personally. Mary and Joseph provided Jesus with love and guidance, allowing Him to grow in wisdom and favour with God and people. Families are where we learn faith, values, and life skills. Just as Jesus grew within His earthly family, we too are shaped by our families. A child learning to ride a bicycle depends on the steady hand of a parent. Similarly, our spiritual and personal growth often depends on the love and guidance we receive within our families. Parents, let us nurture our children in the faith, teaching them by example. Children, let us honour and respect our parents, recognizing their sacrifices and love.

Conclusion

Family life is a precious gift from God, designed to reflect His love and faithfulness. As we reflect on today's Scriptures, we see that families are called to be: A dwelling place for God's presence, Rooted in God for blessings, Grounded in love and patience and Spaces for growth and faith. In the Christmas season, let us recommit to strengthening our family bonds, welcoming Jesus into our homes, and living out His love daily. Just as the Holy Family set an example of faith and unity, may our families become beacons of hope and joy in the world.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, We thank You for the gift of family, where we experience Your love and care. Help us to build our homes on the foundation of Your word, making them places of peace, joy, and growth. Teach us to love, forgive, and encourage one another, following the example of Jesus and His earthly family. May our families reflect Your kingdom, bringing light and hope to the world. As we continue to celebrate the birth of Jesus, may His presence fill our homes, guiding us in love and unity. In His holy name, we pray. Amen.