

The Christian Home, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 12: The Household of Faith: The Church as the Family of God

1 Timothy 3:14–15; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This is the capstone of the entire study, and the teacher should approach it as the destination toward which the whole journey has been moving. What is doctrinally at stake is the nature of the church itself: it is not a building, an organization, or a weekly event, but 'the household of God,' the family of the living God, into which every Christian is born and to which every believer eternally belongs. The passages teach a high view of the church (the 'church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth'), the way one enters this family (no longer 'strangers and aliens' but 'members of the household of God,' brought near through Christ), the call to conduct ourselves rightly within it, and the priority of love among its members. The teacher should present the church as Scripture does, with reverence and affection, as Christ's own household, neither reducing it to a human institution nor speaking of it in sectarian or denominational terms, but as the church of the living God to which all the redeemed belong.

In keeping with the convictions of this study, the teacher should be clear about how one becomes a member of God's household. A person moves from stranger to member not by joining an organization but by responding to the gospel: hearing the good news, believing in Jesus as Lord and Christ, repenting of sin, confessing Him, and being baptized into Christ, by which one is added to the one body (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; Galatians 3:26–27; 1 Corinthians 12:13). This new birth into God's family is then lived out in faithful membership in a local congregation, where God has ordained elders, deacons, and faithful members to serve according to the New Testament pattern, and where Christians 'know how to behave' in His household. The teacher should also draw the threads of the whole study together: the church is the family that embraces and surpasses every earthly household studied, the true and lasting home for the married and single, the parent and the childless, the widow and the orphan alike.

Above all, this lesson is aimed at the heart and at the destination of the whole course. It should leave students with a deepened love for the church as their family, a fresh gratitude for having been brought near from being strangers, a sense of responsibility to live and serve as true members rather than spectators, and, for anyone whose earthly family has failed or is absent, the comforting assurance that they have a true and permanent family in the household of God. The final question deliberately gathers the entire study, inviting each student to name how Jesus has formed them across all twelve lessons and what concrete change they will carry forward. The disciple being formed here is someone who treasures the church as the family of the living God, takes their place in it wholeheartedly, and lives in the light of the home that will outlast every earthly house.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul tells Timothy he is writing so that people will 'know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth' (1 Timothy 3:14–15). What does it mean that the church is the 'household' or family of God, and what weight is added by calling it 'the church of the living God' and 'a pillar and buttress of the truth'?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul gives the church one of its most tender and exalted descriptions: 'the household of God.' The Greek word pictures a family and the home it shares. The church is not first an institution or an event but a family, with God as Father and all believers as brothers and sisters. This is the controlling image of the lesson, and the teacher should let it reframe everything students assume about 'church.' We do not merely attend the church; we belong to a family.

Two further phrases lift the description higher. First, it is 'the church of the living God.' This is no human society but the assembly of the God who is alive, active, and present among His people. The living God dwells with this family; the church is His. That alone should fill members with reverence and wonder at what they are part of. Second, it is 'a pillar and buttress of the truth.' In the ancient world a pillar held up a great building, and a buttress supported and stabilized it. The church is charged with upholding and displaying God's truth in the world, holding the gospel high for all to see. This is a weighty responsibility and a high honor.

Draw out the implications of these titles. Because the church is God's family, it is to be marked by familial love, loyalty, and belonging. Because it is the church of the living God, it is sacred, not casual or optional. Because it is the pillar and buttress of the truth, faithfulness to Scripture matters supremely; the church guards and upholds the truth rather than reshaping it to fit the age. The teacher can hold up all three as a corrective to a low, consumeristic view of church.

Present the church with affection and reverence, as Scripture does, and without sectarian language. This is the church of the living God, Christ's own household, to which all the redeemed belong. Help students see their congregation not as one option among many but as a local expression of the very family of God, sacred and dearly loved by the Father.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church as 'household of God,' a family with God as Father
- 'The church of the living God': sacred, His, indwelt by the living God
- 'Pillar and buttress of the truth': charged to uphold and display the gospel
- Familial love, sacredness, and faithfulness to truth as implications
- A high view of the church against a low, consumeristic one

Discussion Prompts

- What changes when we see the church as a family rather than an event?
- What weight is added by 'the church of the living God'?
- What does it mean that the church upholds the truth like a pillar?

Question 2

Student Question:

If the church is genuinely a family and not merely a weekly gathering, that should shape how we treat it. Do you relate to your congregation more like a family member (committed, invested, present in good times and bad) or more like a spectator who attends an event? Where is God calling you to belong more fully?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application presses the family image into honest reflection. If the church is a family, then relating to it as a mere event, attending when convenient, evaluating the 'service' like a customer, keeping others at arm's length, falls far short of what it is. Family members are committed, present, invested, and known; they show up in good times and bad and carry one another's burdens.

Help students locate where they stand on the spectrum from spectator to family member. The spectator attends, observes, and consumes, but remains essentially uncommitted and unknown. The family member belongs, contributes, and is woven into the lives of others. Many sincere churchgoers are surprised to realize how spectator-like their actual involvement is, present in body but uncommitted in practice.

Move toward belonging more fully. This might mean deepening relationships rather than slipping in and out, being present in others' joys and sorrows, joining the ordinary life of the body beyond the assembly, or simply letting oneself be known. Invite each student to name one concrete way to belong to their church family more fully, not merely to attend it more often.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Relating to the church as event versus as family
- Family marked by commitment, presence, and being known
- The surprising spectator-likeness of much churchgoing
- One concrete step toward belonging, not merely attending

Discussion Prompts

- Do you relate to your congregation as a family member or a spectator?
- What would deeper belonging look like for you?

- Where is God calling you to invest more fully in the church family?

Question 3

Student Question:

To the Ephesians, who had once been outsiders, Paul writes, “you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). According to the New Testament, how does a person move from being a ‘stranger’ to a ‘member’ of God’s household, and what does it mean to be brought near and made family through Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Ephesians 2:19 comes at the climax of one of Scripture’s great gospel passages. Paul has reminded the Ephesians that they were once ‘separated from Christ, alienated ... strangers ... having no hope and without God in the world’ (2:12), and that they have now been ‘brought near by the blood of Christ’ (2:13). The result: ‘you are no longer strangers and aliens, but ... members of the household of God.’ The movement from stranger to family member is the work of the gospel.

The teacher should make clear how this transition happens, in keeping with the New Testament pattern. A person does not become a member of God’s family merely by being born into a Christian home, joining an organization, or admiring Jesus from a distance. One enters by responding to the gospel: hearing the good news, believing in Jesus as Lord and Christ, repenting of sin, confessing Him, and being baptized into Christ, by which God adds the believer to His family and body (Acts 2:38, 41; Galatians 3:26–27). This is the new birth (John 1:12–13; 3:5), by which strangers become sons and daughters. The teacher should present this clearly and warmly, as the open door through which anyone may come.

Dwell on the wonder of being ‘brought near.’ The barrier was real, our sin separated us from a holy God, and the distance was infinite. We could not bridge it. But the blood of Christ has brought us near, reconciled us, and made former strangers into family. This is sheer grace. No one earns a place in God’s household; it is granted through what Christ has done, received by faith and obedience to the gospel.

Note the breadth of the welcome in Ephesians. Paul is writing about Jew and Gentile made one in Christ, former enemies now seated at the same family table. The household of God transcends every human division of race, class, and background. Whoever comes to Christ on the gospel’s terms is made a full member, no longer a stranger, regardless of where they came from.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gospel movement from ‘stranger and alien’ to ‘member of the household’

- Brought near 'by the blood of Christ,' not by human effort
- Entering the family through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26–27)
- The new birth by which strangers become sons and daughters (John 1:12–13)
- The household transcending every human division (Jew and Gentile made one)

Discussion Prompts

- How does a person move from 'stranger' to 'member' of God's household?
- What does it mean to be 'brought near' by the blood of Christ?
- How does this family transcend the divisions that divide the world?

Question 4

Student Question:

Becoming part of God's family is not automatic; it comes through responding to the gospel and being born into His household. Have you truly entered this family, through faith in Jesus, repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ, and are you living as one who has been brought near? If you have, how does remembering that you were once a 'stranger' shape your gratitude and your welcome of others?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application is the most personal in the lesson, and the teacher should handle it with both clarity and warmth, since the eternal welfare of souls is in view. The question asks directly whether each student has truly entered God's family through the gospel, and whether they are living as one brought near. It is appropriate, in a study's final lesson, to press this gently home.

For those who have obeyed the gospel, the question turns toward gratitude and welcome. Remembering that we were once strangers, with no claim on God, should fill us with wonder at the grace that made us family, and should make us eager to welcome others as we were welcomed. The Christian who forgets they were once an outsider grows proud and unwelcoming; the one who remembers stays humble and open. This connects directly to the hospitality of Lesson 11 and the embrace of every household in Lesson 10.

For any who have not truly entered, who may have grown up around the church, admired Jesus, or attended faithfully without ever responding to the gospel, the teacher should make the door plain and inviting, without pressure or manipulation. The same gospel that brought every member near is available to them: to believe in Jesus, repent, confess Him, and be baptized into Christ, and so be born into the family. The teacher should be ready to talk further, and to involve the elders, with anyone whom this question stirs. Handle this as an invitation from a loving Father, not as a threat.

Keep the tone one of assurance and joy. The point is not to make secure believers anxious but to ensure that everyone has actually come through the door into the family, and to deepen every member's gratitude for the grace that brought them in.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A direct, gentle call to examine whether one has entered God's family
- Gratitude rooted in remembering we were once strangers
- The humble, welcoming spirit of those who remember their own welcome
- The gospel door held open warmly to any who have not entered
- Assurance and joy, not anxiety or pressure

Discussion Prompts

- Have you truly entered God's family through the gospel?
- How does remembering you were once a 'stranger' shape your gratitude?
- How should that memory shape the way you welcome others?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul's whole purpose in writing was so that Christians would 'know how one ought to behave in the household of God' (1 Timothy 3:15). Why does it matter that there is a right way to live and order ourselves within God's family, and what does it tell us that God cares not only that we belong to the church but how we conduct ourselves in it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul states his very purpose in writing: 'that you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God.' This is striking. God cares not only that we belong to His family but how we conduct ourselves within it. A household has an order, a way of life, patterns of behavior that befit it. The church is not a free-for-all but a family with a Father whose character its members are to reflect.

Draw out that this gives dignity and seriousness to church life. The surrounding context of 1 Timothy addresses how the household is to be ordered: the qualifications of elders (overseers) and deacons (3:1–13), the conduct of men and women in the assembly, the care of widows, sound teaching. God has ordained a pattern for His household, with elders shepherding, deacons serving, and all members living and serving according to the New Testament. The teacher should present this pattern as a gift, not a burden, the wise ordering of the family by its Father, so that it functions in love, truth, and good order.

Help students see that 'how to behave' in God's household includes the character and conduct the whole study has commended: love, honor, service, purity, faithfulness, humility, bearing

with one another. The family of God is to look like its Father. How members treat one another, speak to one another, and serve one another either adorns or dishonors the household and the God whose name it bears.

The teacher can note that this concern for right conduct flows from love, not legalism. A good family has a way of life because its members belong to one another and to their Father. To care how we behave in God's household is to take seriously that we represent the living God and live before watching outsiders as the pillar and buttress of His truth.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God caring not only that we belong but how we conduct ourselves
- The church as a family with an ordained order and way of life
- The New Testament pattern: elders shepherding, deacons serving, members serving
- Right conduct as reflecting the Father's character, adorning His household
- Concern for conduct flowing from love and belonging, not legalism

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it matter how we behave in God's household, not just that we belong?
- How is God's ordering of His family a gift rather than a burden?
- How does our conduct adorn or dishonor the household of God?

Question 6

Student Question:

In a healthy family, everyone contributes; no one is merely served. Honestly, are you more of a consumer in the church family (receiving, attending, evaluating) or a contributor (serving, giving, building up others)? What is one specific way you could take greater ownership of your place in God's household?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application applies 'how to behave' to one of the most practical questions of church life: am I a consumer or a contributor? In a healthy family, everyone contributes according to their ability; no one is merely served while giving nothing. A family of only consumers would collapse. Yet much of modern church culture trains people to be consumers, to attend, evaluate, and receive, rather than to serve, give, and build up.

Help students assess honestly where they fall. The consumer comes to get: to receive teaching, enjoy the music, have needs met, and judge whether the experience was satisfying. The contributor comes to give: to serve, to encourage, to use their gifts (recall the stewardship of Lesson 11) for the building up of others. Most people lean one way, and the lean is often unexamined. The question invites honest self-assessment without shame.

Move toward greater ownership. Taking one's place in God's household might mean beginning to serve in some concrete way, using a gift for the body, investing in relationships, giving generously, or simply shifting one's posture from 'what did I get?' to 'what can I give?' Invite each student to name one specific way to move from consumer toward contributor in their church family.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Consumer versus contributor in the church family
- A healthy family requiring everyone to contribute
- Modern church culture training consumers
- Shifting posture from 'what did I get?' to 'what can I give?'

Discussion Prompts

- Are you more a consumer or a contributor in the church family?
- What gift could you bring to build up the body?
- What is one way to take greater ownership of your place in God's household?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul writes, "As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). Why does Paul direct us to do good to 'everyone' and yet give a special priority to fellow believers, and what does this teach about the mutual care God expects within His family?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Galatians 6:10 sets out the scope and the priority of Christian love: 'do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.' Both halves matter. 'To everyone' guards against a narrow, inward-looking love; Christians are to do good to all people, believer and unbeliever alike, as the open home of Lesson 11 displayed. The family of God is not a closed circle that ignores the world.

Yet there is a special priority: 'especially to those who are of the household of faith.' This is not partiality or favoritism in a sinful sense but the natural and right ordering of love within a family. Just as a person rightly has special obligations to their own household (Lesson 9, 1 Timothy 5:8), so believers have special obligations to their spiritual family. Charity begins, though it does not end, at home. The church is to be a community where members genuinely care for one another's needs, material and spiritual.

Draw out what this mutual care looks like. The New Testament is full of 'one another' commands: love one another, bear one another's burdens, encourage one another, serve one

another, forgive one another, pray for one another. These are family obligations, the ordinary ways members of God's household look after their own. A church where this love is real becomes a refuge, especially for those (Lesson 10) whose earthly families are absent or failing.

The teacher should connect this to the whole vision of the study. The household of God is meant to be the place where the lonely find belonging, the struggling find help, and every member finds a family. 'Doing good to the household of faith' is how that family becomes, in practice, the true home God intends it to be.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- 'Do good to everyone': love not narrow or inward-looking
- 'Especially the household of faith': the right ordering of love in a family
- Special obligations to the spiritual family, not sinful partiality
- The 'one another' commands as family obligations
- Mutual care making the church a refuge, especially for the lonely

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul say 'everyone' and yet 'especially' the household of faith?
- What does mutual care within God's family actually look like?
- How does this love make the church a true home for the lonely?

Question 8

Student Question:

Doing good 'to the household of faith' becomes real only with specific people. Who in your church family is God placing on your heart right now, someone to encourage, carry, include, or serve? What is one concrete way you could do good to them this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application makes 'doing good to the household of faith' concrete by asking students to name specific people. Love in the abstract changes nothing; the command becomes real only when directed at an actual brother or sister with an actual need. The question presses students to identify who in their church family God is placing on their heart.

Help students notice the people in their congregation who need someone to do them good: the discouraged, the grieving, the lonely (recall Lesson 10), the new member who knows no one, the family in crisis, the elderly saint who is rarely visited, the young person adrift. Often the people most in need of family love are quietly overlooked. 'Doing good' to them might mean encouragement, practical help, inclusion, a visit, a meal, a willingness to carry a burden.

Move toward one concrete act this week. The aim is to convert the general command into a single, specific deed of love toward a named person. Invite each student to identify one member of the household of faith and one concrete way to do them good soon, and to actually follow through. As the study closes, this is a fitting way to begin living its truths immediately.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Love made real by directing it at specific people
- Noticing the overlooked: the grieving, lonely, new, and struggling
- Concrete forms of doing good: encouragement, help, inclusion, presence
- One specific deed of love toward a named person this week

Discussion Prompts

- Who in your church family is God placing on your heart right now?
- What concrete good could you do for them this week?
- What keeps you from acting, and how could you follow through?

Question 9

Student Question:

This study has moved through marriage, children, parents, singleness, and the open home, and now it arrives here: the church as the family of God, the household into which every Christian is born and which outlasts every earthly home. How does the household of God gather up and surpass all the earthly households we have studied, so that even those without spouse, children, or a happy home of their own have a true and lasting family? How does Jesus' own teaching that 'whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother' (Mark 3:35) reshape the way we understand family itself?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block and the theological summit of the entire study, and the teacher should give it room. The question asks how the household of God gathers up and surpasses all the earthly households the study has examined. The answer reframes everything that has come before. Every earthly home, marriage, parents and children, the single and the widowed, the open and the hard home, finds its meaning and its destination in the family of God.

Show first how the household of God gathers up the earthly homes. Marriage, we saw in Lesson 2, was always a picture pointing to Christ and the church, the ultimate marriage of the Bridegroom and His bride. The parent-child bond images God's fatherhood and our adoption as His children. The honoring of family, the care of the weak, the open home, all of these find their fullest expression in the family of God, where God is Father, Christ is elder brother, and

believers are siblings who bear one another's burdens. The earthly households are the shadows; the household of God is the substance.

Show next how the household of God surpasses the earthly homes, and this is where the deepest comfort of the whole study lies. Earthly families are temporary; they are formed and dissolved, they fail, they grieve, and they end at death. Jesus taught that in the resurrection there is no marriage (Matthew 22:30); the earthly home, precious as it is, is not eternal. But the family of God is forever. It is the family into which every Christian is born and to which every believer eternally belongs. This means that those without spouse, without children, without a happy home, or without any earthly family at all (Lesson 10) are not lacking the most important family. They possess it fully. The church is the true and lasting home for everyone in it.

Draw out Jesus' own startling redefinition of family. When told His mother and brothers were outside, He looked at those gathered around Him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother' (Mark 3:34–35). Jesus did not despise the natural family (from the cross He provided for His mother), but He taught that the family of faith is deeper and more enduring than the family of blood. Spiritual kinship outlasts and outranks biological kinship. This is extraordinarily good news for anyone whose earthly family has failed them: in Christ they have mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters beyond counting (Mark 10:29–30).

Bring the whole study to its resolution here. The point of all twelve lessons has not been merely to build better earthly homes (though it has aimed at that), but to point beyond them to the home that lasts. We labor to build Christian homes precisely because they image and feed into the household of God. And we lift our eyes past them to the family that will gather, whole and unbroken, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The teacher should let students feel both the dignity this gives to their earthly homes and the comfort it gives to those whose earthly homes are empty or broken: the truest family is the one the gospel has given them, and it is forever.

Close this question by uniting the married and the single, the parent and the childless, the joyful and the grieving, in one truth: whatever your earthly household, you belong to the household of God, and that family will still be yours when every earthly house has passed away. No member of God's family is without a home.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The household of God gathering up every earthly home studied
- Marriage and family as shadows; the family of God as the substance
- Earthly families temporary; the family of God eternal (Matthew 22:30)
- A true, lasting family for those without spouse, children, or happy home
- Jesus redefining family: kinship of faith deeper than kinship of blood (Mark 3:34–35; 10:29–30)
- The whole study resolved: earthly homes pointing to the home that lasts

- Every member of God's family possessing a true and permanent home

Discussion Prompts

- How does the family of God gather up all the earthly homes we have studied?
- How does it surpass them, especially for those without an earthly family?
- How does Jesus' teaching reshape what 'family' ultimately means?

Question 10

Student Question:

As we close this entire study of the Christian home, look back not only over this lesson but over all twelve, from God's design for marriage to the household of God. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this study. What is the single most important truth about the Christian home that you most need to carry forward, and what is one concrete change you will make in how you live as a spouse, parent, child, single believer, host, or member of God's family?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers not only the lesson but the entire study, and the teacher should treat it as such, allowing extra time and weight. The question asks each student to look back over all twelve lessons, from God's design for marriage to the household of God, and to name one specific way Jesus has formed them and one concrete change they will make. This is the moment to harvest the fruit of the whole journey.

Resist letting the answers stay general. Press for the specific and the personal, suited to each student's station. A husband may name a renewed commitment to love sacrificially; a wife, to respect and trust; a parent, to teach and discipline in love; an adult child, to honor and care for aging parents; a single believer, to receive their season as a gift and serve wholeheartedly; anyone, to open their home or to take their place more fully in the family of God. The study has touched every life in the room; invite each to name where Jesus has met them and what they will do.

Help students see the through-line of the whole study. From the garden to the household of God, the consistent message has been that the home was God's idea, that He has a beautiful design for it, and that every Christian home is meant to point beyond itself to Christ and His church and to feed into the eternal family of God. The aim was never mere information about the home but transformation, people actually becoming more like Christ and building genuinely Christian homes that display the gospel.

Close the entire study where it has been heading all along, with worship and hope. Lift students' eyes to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the great homecoming toward which every Christian home and every longing heart is pointed. Send them out not merely better informed about marriage, parenting, and family, but changed, more devoted to Christ, more committed to their

earthly homes, and more deeply at home in the family of the living God, the home that will never end.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Gathering the entire twelve-lesson study, not only this lesson
- Formation as specific and personal, suited to each student's station
- The through-line: the home as God's design, pointing to Christ and His church
- Transformation, not mere information, as the aim of the whole study
- Closing in worship and hope toward the marriage supper of the Lamb

Discussion Prompts

- Across all twelve lessons, how has Jesus formed you through this study?
- What single truth about the Christian home will you carry forward?
- What one concrete change will you make in how you live in your home and God's family?