



The TRUTH About – Restoring Families 3rd October 2021 Brian Greenaway

This Study Guide provides a summarised study with additional discussion questions based on the scriptures mentioned in the sermon.

Connect:

1. Read [Hebrews 10:19-25](#)

*“All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”
Tolstoy [Anna Karenina]*

2. Is there such a thing as a happy family?
3. What do you perceive to be a happy family?
4. How does the media portray a ‘happy family’?

*“In reality there is no such thing as a perfect family. When you look beneath the surface you see that all families have problems – some large, some small. That no family is perfect. If you family has struggled at some time, you are not alone, we all have.”
Pastor Brian Greenaway*

5. We live in a fallen world; a world that is damaged by man’s disobedience. God designed the universe and made it perfect. Man ruined every aspect of it through his sin and selfishness. Nothing will be perfect until Jesus returns. We should not pretend that it will. However, God has given us the truth, the Bible to give us principles on which to build our lives. The Bible is not just good ideas and it’s not a self-help book.

*“It is God’s word, empowered by His Spirit and if we live a life in obedience to it, His Holy Spirit will empower and enable us to fulfil our purpose on this planet.”
Pastor Brian Greenaway*

Engage:

6. Why do so many people have the impression that if you are a believer in Jesus, you will always be wealthy, healthy and have great relationships (when none of the early church lived like that)?
7. It is true that God does provide, God does heal and God does enable us to forgive and show grace (which are key components of good relationships). But as believers we have to learn to navigate this fallen world in the context of a pattern that God has set out.

8. What does a 'successful' family look like?
9. Has God's original design for family changed?
10. Read [Genesis 4:19-24](#)
11. What we see in Lamech is wholly unrighteous, what is unrighteous and why is it unrighteous?
 - Lamech is the great, great, great grandson of Cain - an unrighteous line.
 - He was a man who was dependent on his own strength. Not in God's way but in a low earthly way. He was vengeful and nasty.
12. In the next couple of verses, we see that Adam and Eve have another son called Seth - Adam says, 'For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel' and through his descendants in verse 26 'people began to call upon the name of the Lord'. A contrast to the departure under the line of Cain which saw its fruit in Lamech.

Framework:

- God makes a way for putting things right. Think about major Biblical characters who did not live within the pattern God gave us. Abraham, Jacob and David for example. But God works with us in our brokenness and He works with families.
13. So, what does God do to begin again in all this chaos?
 14. He finds a family (not a perfect one) but He makes a choice, a covenant choice - In [Genesis 12](#) He calls Abram and Sarai (as they were called then) - and He begins to unroll His plan for the nations through a family.
 15. Even when Abraham makes some stupid choices:
 - Having a child with Sarah's maid – which caused family friction which is still being played out in the Middle East today.
 - Pretending Sarah was his sister and almost losing her.
 16. In both of the above cases, God had to intervene to put right what Abraham had done wrong. He even worked through that mistake to give a beautiful promise to the descendants of Ishmael.
 17. Read [Genesis 17:18-20](#)
 18. If we look at the stories of these families, we see that God works through them to bring about what?
 19. Next, let's have a look at Jacob. There are a couple of things you should know about Jacob:
 - He was a twister, con man.
 - He did not have the faith of his parents Isaac and Rebekah.
 - There was great contention between Jacob and his brother Esau, Jacob tricked and swindled his brother – so much so that the only thing Isaac and Rebekah could think of doing was to get rid of him.
 - They agreed to send him away to Rebekah's brother Laban (by this time he is over 40, what's he doing hanging around at home anyway?), who was a bigger swindler than Jacob.
 - Laban tricked Jacob on his wedding day and he ended up marrying the wrong sister. In fact, Jacob effectively ends up being tricked and conned by Laban several times.
 - Jacob himself ends up with 4 wives, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah.

- Before that time Jacob had had a faith crisis at Beit El. He travels all the way from Beersheva to Padam Aram – about 10 miles east of Damascus.
20. Read [Genesis 28:10-22](#)
21. Now up until this point, he had an awareness of God, but not really any personal experience. It's in that place, that God begins to work in Jacob's heart. From this point onwards:
- Jacob ends up on a 20-year journey of trials and testing, but he develops his relationship with God, which comes to a crisis point when he travels back to Israel and he comes to the brook Jabbok.
 - It is there that he wrestled the angel and finally came to that place of surrender to God.
 - From here Jacob is a different person, not only in name (Israel) but in nature.
22. Read [Genesis 35:1-15](#)
23. One of the things that does get put right, is Jacobs severe contention with his brother Esau. When Jacob prevailed with God, God changed him but also changed his relationship with others; particularly his family. However, because of what has been sown through Jacob's four wives and children, there is division and contention in his family.
24. Even if you get yourself right with God, you still have to deal with the circumstances of what you have sown in others. Why is this the case?
25. Read [Genesis 37:3](#)
- We see that Joseph's brothers hate him, because of favouritism shown by Jacob and so the saga begins of him being sold into slavery, wrongly accused and forgotten. Until time and God's providence intervenes and he ends up as Prime Minister of Egypt with the power of life and death in his hands.
 - But then we see in Joseph a test of character in a time of immense pressure. He has the power and freedom to kill all of his brothers but he chooses not to, he chooses to forgive and bless.
 - **God works with and through the family unit.**

"Our Western culture revolves around the individual. But in the Biblical world: It was the family."

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26. There are cultures today that are similar. The Shadow of the Sun, by Ryszard Kapuscinski, describes the people he encounters in Somaliland:

The Somali is born somewhere on the road, in a shack-tent or directly under the open sky. He will not know his place of birth; it will not have been written down. Like his parents, he will have no village or town he calls home. He has but a single identity – it is determined by his ties to family, to the kinship group, to the clan.

When two strangers meet, they start by asking, "Who are you?" "I am Soba," the first one begins, "from the family of Ahmad Abdullah, which belongs to the Mussa Arraye group, which is

from the clan of Hasean Said, which is part of the larger Isaaq clan," etc.

After this, the second stranger gives the particulars of his lineage, his roots. The exchange lasts a long time and is immensely important, because both individuals are trying to determine whether something unites them or divides them.

- In the ancient world people did not get their identity from their occupation, but from their family. That is why Genesis is such a foundational book.
27. There are also stories of people who made choices that set them free from dysfunctional situations. Read [Genesis 19:30-38](#)
- Both of these lines produce wicked nations who are immoral, idol worshippers and who sacrifice children. However, Ruth the Moabitess steps into the pages of history when she (described in the Bible as an upright woman) chooses to leave her Moabite identity behind and become part of the House of Israel by marrying Boaz and becoming key in the family line of David and Jesus.
28. What is the centre of our spiritual lives?

"The concept of the sabbath is to spend time with your family and giving space for relaxation. Resting is a Biblical concept.

[Busyness should not be a badge we honour."](#)

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29. Another area that shows up our individualistic western culture, is that we talk about having a personal relationship with Jesus (which is absolutely true and Biblical). But that can never be in isolation. Our life in God should be something that is shared with other believers; you cannot grow alone.
30. Read [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#)
31. Let's return to our opening text, so that you'll be able to see what Pastor Brian is trying to draw out here. Read [Hebrews 10:19-25](#)
- When the writer to the Hebrews encourages believers to meet together, he was envisaging a spirit filled community of believers living in genuine fellowship with one another.
 - V19-22 demonstrates forgiveness
 - We cannot be responsible for others actions, but we can be responsible for how we react to them, and the first one is forgiveness.
32. How quick are you to forgive?
33. Can unforgiveness govern and taint your whole experience of God?
34. [Hebrews 10:23](#) reflects honesty and transparency. Many people say that finance is one of the key areas of disunity between a husband and a wife. But it's more than that, it is honesty, transparency and truth.
35. Are you honest about money?
36. Are you honest in action but not mentally?
37. What is your mind committed to?
38. Are you always honest with your family members?
39. Are you transparent?

- Don't pretend to be super spiritual or portray the idea that you do everything right. God works through imperfect people and sometimes broken situations. God can bring restoration if we are willing to own up to our shortcomings, be honest about our failings and admit we are not superheroes.
- 40. [Hebrews 10:24-25](#) - We have something in our hands - all of us - that is so powerful, yet many don't realise it. It is the power of encouragement.
- 41. [Ephesians 6](#) deals with spiritual warfare. From verse 10 onwards it exhorts us to stand strong, to put on our spiritual armour and to take up the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. It is no mistake that the section of Paul's letter before mentioning the armour of God, deals with relationships. It provides instructions for husbands, wives, children and all those we have close relationships with.