



## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE BIBLICALLY? Reflection and Activity on the Family



*I am the vine, you are the branches.  
Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit,  
because apart from me you can do nothing.  
(John 15:5)*

### **Pope Francis' Prayer to the Holy Family**

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
in you we contemplate  
the splendour of true love;  
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
grant that our families too  
may be places of communion and prayer,  
authentic schools of the Gospel  
and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
may families never again experience  
violence, rejection and division;  
may all who have been hurt or scandalized  
find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,  
make us once more mindful  
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,  
and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
graciously hear our prayer.  
Amen

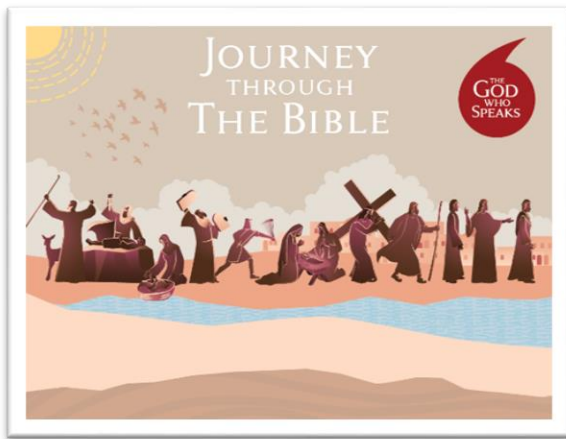




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Most people who want to know more about their family history speak to relatives, read family records and archives. They search genealogical websites and resources to create a picture and pattern of their ancestry. They want to know who they are, where they come from and to discover family secrets. They want to uncover the collective family memory and to connect their own lives with that of relatives past and present. Our identity and roots give us a profound sense of meaning and context so it's no surprise that searching one's family history is such a popular activity around the world.

**In this *Year of the Family*, what can we learn from our extended family in the Bible?**



Who inspires you in Scripture?

Whom do you want to know more about in the Bible?

The Bible is packed with an amazing range of people, each with their own life stories and perspectives on the world.

Reflecting on how God spoke through them - and to them - helps us connect Scripture with our own lives today.

We all have our own unique life story, with highs and lows. Every one of us experiences things differently and has distinct ways of making sense of the world. What's important to us, how we see ourselves and why we act as we do is what makes us individuals.

The same goes for the people mentioned in the Bible. Each had their own individual personalities and reacted to God, to life - and to each other - very differently. The gospels tell us that even Jesus wept, slept, got tired, became angry, felt scared, showed love, pity, and experienced joy (*Matthew 9:36; Mark 3:5; 10:21; 14:33; Luke 10:21; John 4:6, 11:35*). So the stories of Scripture - inspired by God - still connect with us on a very human level.

Of course, the people in the Bible didn't have to deal with traffic jams, online fraud, walking the dog, remembering to put the recycling out - or many other features of our world today. But they did grapple with the life experiences that affect us all, such as relationship ups and downs, trying to make a living, having children, growing old, getting on with the neighbours, keeping warm in winter and a vast range of health problems without the NHS to consult.

Not only that, many of the complex life stories that are included in the Bible make for fascinating reading, and wouldn't look out of place in a tabloid newspaper! Consider:

- Mortgaged Mums Anger at Royal Tax (*Nehemiah 5:1-5*).
- Society Beauty Beheads Drunken General (*Judith chapter 13*).
- Bereaved Dad Battles Dangerous Skin Disease (*Job chapters 1 and 2*).
- Famous Preacher Marries Prostitute (*Hosea 1:1-8*).
- Demands for Release of Notorious Robber (*Matthew 27:15-26*).



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Another way of connecting your story to the biblical story involves considering what you do for a living. In the Middle Ages, towns staged pageants through the streets on the feast of Corpus Christi. During these processions, members of trade guilds (such as weavers and butchers) would perform biblical plays on parade floats. Each guild usually chose a story that related to their craft. For example, the shipbuilders often performed the story of Noah's Ark. The bakers might perform a play based on the Miracle of the Loaves. The fishmongers liked to act out the story of Jonah and the Whale. Pageants helped people connect Scripture with their everyday working lives. Biblical plays and pageants are still performed today, especially around Easter and Christmas, so you may want to watch one in your nearest place when possible or even help create your own one.

Discovering a biblical story that speaks to your working life can be a great way of making the Bible relevant today.



Or why not look for a character in Scripture which appeals to your personality.

If you're creative, you might like to find out about a musician such as David, the craftsman Bezalel or a dreamer such as Joseph in the Old Testament.

If you're into politics and social justice, you might find the range of prophets dynamic reading. If you love common sense, the Psalmists and Wisdom writers might be up your street. If you enjoy learning, perhaps a scholar like Solomon or Ezra might engage you. If you like to compare and contrast different perspectives on the same events then start with two of the gospel accounts of Jesus' life.

There are many fascinating people in the Bible that you may not have heard of. Check out stories of women such as the judge Deborah (*Judges chapters 4 and 5*), first-time mother Hannah (*1 Samuel chapters 1 and 2*) or Queen Esther of Persia (*Esther 2:5-18*). Explore the stories of the farmer Laban (*Genesis chapters 29-32*), the politician Nehemiah (*Nehemiah chapter 1*) or the courageous soldier Judas Maccabeus (*1 Maccabees 3:1-26*).

While the Scriptures don't go into detail about hobbies, they do include stories that might relate to some of your interests: Dancing (*Exodus 15:20*); Music (*Psalms 95; 105; 144*); History (*Psalms 78; 1 & 2 Kings*); Caring for animals (*Proverbs 12:10; Isaiah 40:11*); Interior design (*Exodus chapters 25 and 35 - 39*); Astronomy (*Psalms 8:3 and 147:4; Corinthians 15:40-41*); Learning languages (*Acts 2:1-47*); Carpentry (*Exodus 35:30-37:1-16*); Wisdom and knowledge (*Proverbs 18:15-17; Wisdom 7:15-22*); Athletics (*1 Corinthians 9:24-27*); Exercise (*Isaiah 40:13; 1 Timothy 4:8*); reading and teaching (*1 Timothy 4:13-16*).

The Bible covers the whole of life, from cradle to grave. You'll find passages relating to: Childhood (*1 Samuel chapter 3; Proverbs 1:8; Mark 10:13-16*); young adulthood (*Ecclesiastes 11:9-10; Proverbs 20:29; 1 Timothy 4:12*); married life (*1 Corinthians 13:4-8; 1 Peter 4:8-11; 1 John 4:7-21*); parenthood (*Proverbs 22:6; Colossians 3:21*); single life (*1 Corinthians 7:17; 32-34; Philippians 2:1-4; 1 Peter 4:10-11*); and older age (*Ruth 4:13-16; Ecclesiastes 25:4-6; Luke 2:25-38*).



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Here's an activity to get you thinking about who you are in relation to your Bible family tree. All you need is a Bible or Bible app and your imagination. *Recommended Time: 30 minutes.*

### Scripture Text

*First read this text slowly and prayerfully.*

*Then highlight any words or phrases that you find interesting, inspiring or puzzling.*



<sup>31</sup> Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. <sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." <sup>33</sup> And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" <sup>34</sup> And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."  
(Mark 3:31-35)

*Sit quietly with this text as you meditate further for 5 minutes. Ask God to guide your heart.*

### Questions for reflection (or discussion if you're in a group):

- Is there anybody in Scripture you would like to appear in your Bible family tree?
- Who are they? What are their characteristics, passions or personalities?
- Does any of their story remind you of yours?
- Might they provide inspiration and hope in good times and bad?
- If you can't think of anyone then look at our suggestions on the previous page.

### Pointers

We are often drawn to people for particular reasons:  
They have similar tastes – we have things in common.  
They are the opposite of us – it's refreshing and challenging.  
They have gifts we do not have – they fulfil a need in us.  
They bring out the best in us – we are happier in their company.  
They make us feel comfortable – we can be our true selves.

The Scriptures are a rich resource of families and relationships and they show us time, and again, that humanity hasn't changed that much.

We can learn a lot from Bible characters – they can encourage us in our daily discipleship. Keeping their memory alive is a powerful way to share our faith, doubts, hopes and fears as we seek to know Christ more deeply.

### Prayer

*God of my story and all our stories,  
You created us in your own image -  
and wrote us into being.  
The Bible tells us your story  
so that we may praise you  
throughout our lives.  
Amen*