

Bible Promises for Families

As for me & my family, we will serve the LORD. JOSHUA 24:15

Jessica Smartt



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Introduction

One dusky July sunset, when I was twenty-six, I sat on the front porch of our little townhome, stretching and sweaty after a nice evening jog. I was pregnant but didn't know it yet. The little kids in the townhome next door had just finished their baths and were sparkle-eyed, wet-haired, and laughing as they ran in the yard in their pajamas. For some inexplicable reason, the everyday scene suddenly made me cry. I wanted to be a mom. I wanted kids of my own in fresh pajamas after bath time. It was the cry of my heart to have and grow a family.

That was seventeen years ago. These family-building years have been—continue to be—the richest of our lives. And yet, these years have been harder and more stretching than I ever could have imagined they would be when I was that fresh, energetic twenty-six-year-old in cute yellow running shoes. I had no concept, no language, to understand the depth and gravity of raising a family. Still, one thing is deeply true: As we have built our family, God has been so good.

God loves families. He is deeply committed to families. If you're in the trenches of raising kids, whether they're little or big, it can often feel like you're doing it alone. Even if having a family is all you've ever wanted, even if you know your job as a parent is meaningful, it can feel like a heavy and overwhelming load. *So much* to do and so much riding on your choices. Parenting is a job that is both specific and logistical, weighty and emotional. You manage their dental cleanings . . . and navigate their hormonal outbursts. The weight of it is too much for anyone. Often I feel I literally can't take a deep breath because I am burdened by all that is riding on me, all that I'm responsible for. I have this clear picture in my head of what it looks like, this family I'm trying to raise, but getting there feels like an everlasting walk uphill.

This is why we need the Bible's promises. In His Word, God reminds us that we are not alone. Far from being alone, we are being carried, strengthened, and guided. *He doesn't ask anything of us as parents that He doesn't promise to give us.*

Maybe you picked up this book because you're weary. You love your family more than anything, and you've been trying so hard, but a creeping doubt as to whether you can really do this still nags at you.

You can't.

But He can. And He will. God, our good Father, the Author of families, the Sustainer of all things, the One who gives strength to the weary and hope to the broken—He is walking alongside you, working in you and through you. I

hope (and know!) that as you read these verses from God's Word, they will be the deep encouragement you have been longing for. Raising a gospel-centered family (who still inexplicably needs breakfast cereal and clean socks) is no easy task. Impossible, even, on your own. As you read these words, may you be reminded that the kind of family you long for was *God's idea first*. He's got you from start to finish.

Authority

I vividly remember the moment that the smiling, carefree nurses walked my husband and me to the car with our three-day-old son. As they completed the last few steps of the maternity checkout procedures, my husband clumsily snapped the infant car seat into our tiny black Volvo. I remember thinking, *Are you just going to let us drive home with him? You think we can do this?* It was the slowest we ever drove. Nothing quite matches the cosmic parental overwhelm of that moment, but that feeling of "I'm the one in charge?" never fully dissolves either. Whether it's a complex discipline problem, an alarming injury or illness, or a massive looming decision—I rarely feel "up to this." So often I am (philosophically speaking) looking around for the parent in the room, and then I realize, alas, I am the parent. This is why God's ultimate authority is the most blessed relief. Our Father reigns; He is at the helm.

At the same time, He puts us in families and puts us in charge. Some of us bossy firstborns (ahem) have been waiting for this moment all our lives. Kids to be in charge

of! I can relate, but then I realize how imperfect and selfish my discipline efforts are. How desperately I need Jesus to help me parent well! Whether being in charge comes easily to you or whether you need God's help to embrace the authority He's given you, He is the source of strength that we need as parents. We can be the parent in the room, even when we feel ill-equipped or weak, because we have the Perfect Parent.

When you remember that God is in charge of your family

God places the lonely in families.

PSALM 68:6

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth."

MATTHEW 28:18

God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.

EPHESIANS 1:22

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—

AUTHORITY

such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities
in the unseen world.

Everything was created through him and for
him.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-16

Every house has a builder, but the one who
built everything is God.

HEBREWS 3:4

When you experience God's discipline

My child, don't reject the LORD's discipline,
and don't be upset when he corrects you.
For the LORD corrects those he loves,
just as a father corrects a child in whom he
delights.

PROVERBS 3:11-12

As you endure this divine discipline,
remember that God is treating you as his
own children. Who ever heard of a child
who is never disciplined by its father? If God
doesn't discipline you as he does all of his
children, it means that you are illegitimate
and are not really his children at all. Since we
respected our earthly fathers who disciplined
us, shouldn't we submit even more to the
discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live
forever?

For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness.

HEBREWS 12:7-10

I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.

REVELATION 3:19

When you aren't sure how or why you should discipline your children

Those who love their children care enough to discipline them.

PROVERBS 13:24

Direct your children onto the right path,
and when they are older, they will not leave it.

PROVERBS 22:6

To discipline a child produces wisdom,
but a mother is disgraced by an undisciplined
child.

PROVERBS 29:15

Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.

2 TIMOTHY 4:2

No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

HEBREWS 12:11

When you aren't sure why your children should obey you

Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

EXODUS 20:12

My child, listen when your father corrects you.
Don't neglect your mother's instruction.
What you learn from them will crown you with
grace
and be a chain of honor around your neck.

PROVERBS 1:8-9

My son, obey your father's commands,
and don't neglect your mother's instruction.
Keep their words always in your heart.
Tie them around your neck.
When you walk, their counsel will lead you.
When you sleep, they will protect you.
When you wake up, they will advise you.
For their command is a lamp
and their instruction a light;

their corrective discipline
is the way to life.

PROVERBS 6:20-23

To learn, you must love discipline;
it is stupid to hate correction.

PROVERBS 12:1

Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

HEBREWS 13:17

Choices

When you wonder if your family's choices matter

Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.

MATTHEW 3:8

Letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

ROMANS 8:6

Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful

CHOICES

nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

GALATIANS 6:7-8

If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless.

JAMES 1:26

Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

1 PETER 2:12

When you need reassurance that obedience brings blessings

Oh, the joys of those who do not
follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners,
or join in with mockers.

But they delight in the law of the LORD,
meditating on it day and night.

They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.

Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.

PSALM 1:1-3

Turn from evil and do good,
and you will live in the land forever.

PSALM 37:27

Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

JAMES 1:22-25

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

MATTHEW 7:24-25, ESV

When you struggle with temptation

How can a young person stay pure?
By obeying your word.

PSALM 119:9

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.

PSALM 119:105

COMFORT

You are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. . . .

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.

ROMANS 8:9, 12-13

The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness.

ROMANS 8:26

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.

EPHESIANS 6:10-11

Comfort

One of the things I find interesting about comfort is that it's a lofty, vague-sounding idea but, in real life, it often involves real things you can touch and smell and taste. Salty chicken soup with fluffy dumplings when your throat hurts. A soft, fluffy blanket wrapped up to your chin when you feel feverish. Chocolate chip cookies and a foot rub after a long day. A head nuzzle, a back scratch, hot pancakes on a dreary Monday, cups of peppermint tea

on the white sofa while we sit and talk, a verse scribbled on a Post-it, just the thing I needed to hear. God has ministered to me through all of those things. We can't protect our families from hurt, disappointment, and heartache, but we can offer them the comfort God has given us. In fact, God promises to ready us for this very thing. He comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort others. Don't ever forget to come to the Father with your brokenness and bad days, and never underestimate the ministry of hot chicken soup (and other comforting carbs!).

When you wonder if God cares when someone in your family is sad

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

PSALM 34:18

You keep track of all my sorrows.
You have collected all my tears in your bottle.
You have recorded each one in your book.

PSALM 56:8

God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

MATTHEW 5:4

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

1 PETER 5:7

When your family needs God's comfort

Even when I walk
 through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
 for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
 protect and comfort me.

PSALM 23:4

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

MATTHEW 11:28-30

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.

JOHN 16:33

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4