



Strengthening Families Program 7-17 “Christian Companion Study Guide”

“Our vision is to heal and transform the world.”

FOREWORD

Parents today long for love and peace in their homes, and physical and emotional safety for their children. The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is a 12-week family relationship course for parents and youth that offers skill training to facilitate those goals. SFP was originally developed in 1982 under a grant from the National Institute of Drug Abuse by Dr. Karol Kumpfer and associates for substance abusing parents and their children. Her grant assignment was to discover which parenting skills were necessary to keep high-risk youth from following their parents into addiction. Research showed that a family-centered approach (teaching skills to both parents and youth and having them practice together in class) provided the most long-term positive outcomes. SFP is now taught in 36 countries and has been tested in 13 Randomized Control Trials, and found effective.

While SFP was originally created for drug-abusing parents, it is NOT a drug and alcohol prevention program. It is a family relationship skills class for all families – not just those in trouble. Only one lesson focuses on alcohol and drug use. The other lessons teach parenting and youth life-skills to reduce things that put kids at risk for using alcohol and drugs. Families learn Bonding skills, like looking for and complimenting the good in each other daily, avoiding criticism, and using polite, positive ways to communicate. SFP teaches skills in setting personal and family Boundaries, like clear family rules against youth alcohol, tobacco and drug use; and positive discipline without resorting to physical punishment. Parents also learn skills in Monitoring their children’s emotional well-being, as well as their activities, to see that they always stay in an alcohol and drug-free social environment. When parents and youth learn and practice these skills, SFP has been shown to create stronger, more loving families, which improves children’s mental health, emotional resilience, and school performance; and it reduces teen alcohol and drugs use, delinquency and depression.

Why a Christian Companion to SFP?

This SFP “Christian Companion Study Guide” was created at the request of the substance abuse prevention coordinator of the United Methodist Church. He recognized that although SFP is a secular program that teaches research-proven skills to improve family relationships and help youth avoid alcohol, drugs, and delinquent behavior, the prosocial skills taught in the SFP classes coincided well with Jesus’ teachings. He reasoned that seeing a connection between SFP skills and the scriptures might help families feel more motivated to practice the skills. This would enable them to better live Christ’s teaching to “cast off the works of darkness” [*antisocial ways of behaving*], “put on Jesus Christ” [*Christ’s prosocial ways*], and develop qualities of the divine nature (Romans 13:12-14 & 2 Peter 1:4-9).

Adopting SFP as part of a church health program would help “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just” (Luke 1:17 NIV). Practicing the SFP prosocial behaviors at home would help families become better followers of Jesus Christ, and reap the benefits: “He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Why does the Strengthening Families Program work?

The human brain is hard-wired to produce feelings of pleasure when we do prosocial behaviors. (*“Prosocial” is defined as behaviors that contribute to the well-being of both the person and society; while “antisocial” behaviors harm self and society.*) So, when we do good, we feel good. SFP works because each lesson teaches “prosocial” skills. When learned and intentionally practiced, these prosocial skills trigger feel-good brain chemicals, which reinforces the good behavior and helps “wire” the skill into the physical structure of our brains. It becomes part of our habit patterns and character – of who we are. Practicing the SFP skills helps people to both feel better and behave better. To facilitate change, Mindfulness, a brain-training skill to increase focus, emotional regulation, and impulse control was included in SFP 7-17 lessons (for ages 7-17 with pre-school lessons for ages 3-6).

SFP skills training can be accessed either in a class, online videos, or via a Home-Use DVD. Depending on how it is taught, SFP can be a “universal” prevention program for low-risk families; but also as a “selective” or “indicated” program for higher-at-risk populations with higher doses. SFP is recommended for all families, and has been shown to:

- Reduce youth alcohol and drug use, which is the source of most adult addiction
- Increase family bonding and reduce family conflict
- Reduce youth depression and school failure
- Protect children from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that contribute to emotional dysfunction, addiction, and mental illness.

How is the Strengthening Families Program Taught?

The Strengthening Families Program curriculum can be taught in multiple ways:

- 1) Originally, SFP was taught in a **Multi-Class** setting, with parents, teens, and children taught in separate one-hour skills classes. During the second hour of class, families rejoined in a Family Session to practice the skills they learned in their classes. It is the family practice that ensures success. The SFP classes usually begin with a family-style dinner, because it increases attendance and helps families bond as they eat together. This Multi-Class model requires six Family Coaches (facilitators) to teach the Parent, Teen, Children and Family classes.
- 2) If an organization cannot do the 3-classroom model, they can teach the same SFP skills via a **“SFP DVD Family Discussion Group.”** In that SFP model, two Family Coaches conduct a joint parent - youth skills class with or without dinner. Using the SFP DVD as the main teacher, families watch the DVD together, while the Family Coaches pause it at set intervals, ask scripted discussion questions, and help families practice the skills. The outcomes are nearly as good as the original version.
- 3) The third SFP model is a universal **SFP Home-Study** model, where parents and children watch the SFP Home-Use DVD at home, pause where indicated, practice the skills, and use the handouts and tracking sheets provided. A study of 83 families reported 80 % of the positive outcomes of attending a class.

- 4) The fourth SFP model is an **“In-home Coach”** model where a SFP Family Coach visits a family in their home, plays the SFP DVD, pauses it at intervals, teaches skills, asks discussion questions, and helps the family practice the skills. Here is a report from a Family Coach in Durham, NC:
- “Alex (not his real name) was referred to our Intensive In-Home program for aggressive, defiant, manipulative/lying, and non-compliance at school. They had moved to NC from NJ approximately 1 year ago and had been homeless/living at a shelter for families. About the time we met, the family had transitioned to a home environment. Because of my enthusiasm for SFP (having practiced the skills myself), Alex’s mother, who has two other children ages 3 and 1, was vocally supportive of SFP from the moment I introduced the program. I feel that Mom’s energized engagement was a key part of the success, and I could see the difference that it made with regard to Alex paying attention throughout the session and utilizing tracking sheets on a consistent basis. What shocked me was that he was interested in learning SFP skills even when his mother could not participate in the lesson. The impact that SFP had on Alex’s problem behaviors is staggering. I watched his defiance, complaints, non-compliance, lying, and inappropriate negative behavior reduce in frequency and intensity and then melt away in about 3 months. The following three months were spent challenging Alex and setting difficult yet achievable goals related to his behavior. As we moved through the lessons, problems related to Alex’s behavior had reduced to the point where he was setting goals to go consecutive weeks without displaying any negative behaviors. By the end of the treatment period, Alex started the school year without any behavior problems at school or home. He now looks for opportunities to teach his siblings and he has been observed using leadership skills in unstructured settings with peers. SFP impact on this home is nothing short of miraculous.” (A.R. Marino, MA, LPC)*
- 5) A fifth SFP method is to distribute the SFP DVD through the **Middle School Health Classes** with Parent-Child homework assignments to watch the SFP DVD and answer the questions. Salt Lake City School District noted a 50% drop in 8th Grade binge drinking when using this method.

How to Use the Christian Companion with an SFP Lesson

The Christian Companion scriptures and discussion questions can be used to briefly introduce each SFP lesson – thus adding a Gospel theme to the SFP curriculum. Using these scriptures to introduce an SFP lesson will give SFP a spiritual focus, making it appropriate for a Sunday School class.

In addition, the SFP Christian Companion can be used by families at home as a scripture study guide to supplement their SFP skills practice. Most Christian parents see their parental role as a stewardship from God, to work with Him in loving and training children to not only become thoughtful, responsible adults, but to become Christ-like and sin-resistant, prepared for an eternal life with God. Learning and practicing the SFP skills and watching the SFP videos / DVD, can help parents reduce family conflict and increase love within families -- key Christian goals: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). “Let us love one another. . . Anyone who does not love, does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:7-8).

So, while SFP is not a religious program, this Christian Companion shows how SFP skills can be useful to help people follow Jesus Christ’s prosocial teachings. As families study the verses in the Christian Companion that coincide with SFP prosocial skills, the hope is that it will motivate them to practice the SFP skills more at home. If so, it will likely enable them to better live Christ’s teachings (John 14:15); avoid “grieving” the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30); receive answers to their prayers (1 John 3:12); abide in Christ and stay attached to Him as the True Vine (John 15:1-11) – all common Christian goals.

THE BEATITUDES – A FORMAT TO RELATE CHRIST-LIKE QUALITIES TO SFP SKILLS

We used Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount, which begins with his Beatitudes – personal qualities Jesus called “blessed” or “happy” (*depending on the translation*) -- as a framework to relate the SFP skills to scripture. Some scholars have hypothesized that the Beatitudes are actually a description of Christ's own personal character. If so, embracing them would enable people to better follow Him. We also included other scriptures* that describe Beatitude qualities that correspond with each lesson.

Jesus said those who embraced his Beatitudes as their own ways of thinking and feeling would experience peace and joy, be called the children of God, and receive wonderful blessings. Jesus must have considered the Beatitudes essential qualities, for at the end of them he declared:

“Whoever ignores one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called the lowest in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps these commands and teaches people to keep them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:19, CEB)

Jesus loved and valued children and indicated that parents who have children, and lovingly nurture them, form a partnership with God. He said, “Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.” He further warned against critical and harsh parenting, which contributes to Adverse Childhood Experiences that harm a child's brain development and impede impulse control: “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 8:5-6 KJV). Most parents genuinely love and want the best for their children, and don't intend to harm them – even if they inadvertently do because of lack of skills. SFP provides research-proven parenting skills to lovingly nurture children and train them in true principles without resorting to harsh discipline.

TO THE TEACHER:

- 1) *This Biblical Companion is meant to accompany the **SFP 7-17 Curriculum** –the Multi-Class model or the SFP DVD Family Discussion Group model, or to be used with the SFP Online or Home-Use DVD.*
- 2) *Each family needs a copy of the SFP DVD and the Biblical Companion Study Guide to review.*
- 3) *As you begin the lesson, take only a few minutes to **briefly** relate the scriptures to SFP skills, or you won't have time to teach the whole SFP lesson. Families can study the scriptures at home.*
- 4) *Encourage parents to be humble, teachable, open to learn, and willing to abandon erroneous attitudes and practices if needed -- the hallmarks of a little child. “Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:4).*
- 5) *Use the SFP 12-Step Teaching Model to teach the class: **Teach, Ask Questions, Demonstrate, Practice, Praise**. This technique helps people accept new attitudes and change behavior.*

**We express gratitude to Rev. Wesley Hartley and Rev. Jeffrey Spence for their editorial assistance and feedback. We used five different Biblical translations to match Biblical verses to each SFP concept or skill. They are:*

*KJV = King James Version; NIV = New International Version; CEB = Common English Bible;
ESV = English Standard Version; NRSV = New Revised Standard Version.*

Strengthening Families Program 7-17
BIBLICAL COMPANION

Introduction Lesson

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: “Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:27 - NIV)

LESSON SUMMARY: The Strengthening Families Program has research proven skills to create happy family relationships, healthy brains, and well-behaved children who stay alcohol and drug-free. All behavior is governed by the brain, which is not fully developed until age 25. Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs harm the developing brain. Most addiction starts in the teens and can be prevented with skilled parenting. Parents need to be trained in the skills of Bonding (creating warm, loving relationships), setting Boundaries (clear, firm rules against alcohol and drug use), and Monitoring teens’ activities to see that they always stay in an alcohol and drug-free social environment. Create Bonding with 10 – 15 minutes of one-on-one play time daily with each child (“My Time”), and eat pleasant family dinners together. Practicing Mindfulness makes your brain more powerful.

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS to MASTER:

- 1- Believe that you can create a happy, loving family as you learn and practice SFP skills.
- 2- As we learn and practice new skills, they are encoded into the physical neurons of our brain.
3. We develop our brain by what we choose to learn, think, speak, view, listen to and do.
- 4- Practicing the skill of Mindfulness trains our brain to focus on what is important, and reject Automatic Negative Thoughts.
- 5- Recognize that all persons are of equal and infinite worth.

GOD’S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

- 1- “Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.” (*John 20:27 - NIV*)
- 2- “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.” (*James 1:22 CEB*)
- 3- “As he thinks in his heart – so is he.” (*Proverbs 23:7 KJV*)
- 4- “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (*Romans 12:2 KJV*) “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” (*James 1:8 KJV*)
- 5- “Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” (*Romans 12:16 NIV*)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

EXPLAIN:

- The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) teaches **prosocial attitudes and skills** that are **research-proven** to create happy, loving family relationships and keep kids addiction-free.

DEFINE:

- By “Pro-social” we mean behaviors that benefit the person who is doing them, as well as benefiting society in general. “Attitudes” are our beliefs about how we should live and treat other people. “Skills” are things we learn to do by practicing them correctly many times.

- These same SFP skills that are proven to create happy family relationships also help us follow Jesus and put His teachings into practice in our lives, as Jesus advised, saying: “Come follow me.” (John 12:26) “Whosoever believes in me will also do the works that I do” (John 14:12- ESV).

ASK: What are some skills you have already learned – and how did you learn them?

(riding a bike, learning to read or add numbers, playing a sport or musical instrument

EXPLAIN::

- We learn family relationship skills the same way as other skills – by believing the skills will benefit us (shifting our attitudes toward truth), and by repeatedly practicing the skills.
- Repeatedly practicing skills wires those actions into the neurons of our brain, and they become part of us -- automatic pathways for our brain to go. That creates new positive habits.
- We will also learn and practice the skill of Mindfulness, which trains our brain to focus on what is important to us, and dismiss judgmental, Automatic Negative Thoughts that discourage us.
- As we adopt the SFP attitudes and practice the SFP skills, we wire our brain to be able to better follow Jesus Christ.

ASK: What are some of the benefits of learning and practicing Christ-like skills?

CONFIRM & EMPHASIZE:

- We feel happier when we strive to follow Jesus and put His teachings into practice – because God hard-wired our brains to produce feelings of pleasure from feel-good brain chemicals when we do pro-social behaviors – things that put us in harmony with the laws God established to governs His universe. So when we do good – we feel good. Jesus said:
“He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

EXPLAIN:

- When we learn and practice Christ-like skills, we are better able to love others as Jesus loves:
“A new commandment I give to you, That ye love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” (John 13:34–35 - ESV)
- The Apostle Paul described the kind of skills we need to develop to love others like Jesus does:
“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking [selfish], It is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” (1 Cor. 13:4-8 - NIV)

CONCLUDE: In this class we will learn the skills Paul said were necessary to have charity and love as Christ loves: skills to be patient, kind, unselfish, and slow to anger. Living a Christ-like life doesn't happen by chance; it takes skill training and practice. Most of the skills necessary to live a Christ-like are taught in the SFP lessons. As you memorize the scripture that goes with each skill, it will help your brain develop correct attitudes, and hopefully motivate your family to practice the fun, easy skills!

BIBLICAL COMPANION

Lesson 1

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: "Blessed are the poor in spirit [*i.e. humble*], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
(Matthew 5:3-ESV)

LESSON SUMMARY: Research shows that the best way to improve a child's behavior is to look for and compliment their good behavior daily. Compliments replenish a child's "emotional bank account, while criticism empties it. We must keep a 4:1 ratio of compliments to criticisms, for criticism and fault-finding harms both giver and receiver. We also need to learn to ignore minor annoying behavior, and instead praise its Positive Opposite whenever we see it. This helps extinguish unwanted annoying behaviors. Children will also learn to give compliments to other family members, including their parents, and to receive a compliment graciously.

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS to MASTER:

1) Look for and compliment the good in family members daily.

2- Ignore minor annoying behaviors

3- Cease to criticize and find fault with others

GOD'S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

1 - "If anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think on these things." (*Philippians 4:8 NIV*)

1a - "Love one another with brotherly affection" (*Romans 12:9 CEB*)

1b- "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." (*Philippians 2:3-ESV*)

1c - Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in darkness. . . . for the darkness has blinded his eyes." (*1 John 2:9-11*)

2 – "If your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness." (*Matthew 6:23*)

2a - "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (*Luke 6:41-ESV*).

3 - "Do not judge or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (*Matthew 7:1-2 NIV*)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER

EXPLAIN:

- In Lesson 1 families learn the skills of looking for and complimenting the good in each other daily, ignoring minor annoying behavior, and ceasing to criticize each other.
- To put these skills into practice, we need to first develop the Christ-like skills of being humble and viewing all others as equals. Jesus warned against pride and encouraged humility. He said:
“God opposes the proud, but gives grace unto the humble.” (James 4:6 - ESV)
“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:4)
- When we are prideful, we have an elevated opinion of our self in relation to others. We have a subtle desire to be superior – which hinders our brain’s ability to see and praise another’s good qualities and accomplishments. The Apostle Paul warned:
“For I say to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” (Romans 12:3)
- Jesus talked about our inability to “see” clearly: “. Our “eye” is actually an extension of our brain that looks out at the world and sends it information. How we choose to interpret what we see is our “eye of awareness” -- our view of life, self, and others. Our eye of awareness is formed by our early life experiences, the home environment we were raised in, by what we choose to believe, and by the sins we choose to engage in.

If we are selfish and prideful, our “eye of awareness” becomes so full of our own self-conceit, that we don’t notice the good in others. Jesus described this as “darkness.” We need to train our “eye” to look for others’ good qualities and feel happy for their successes.

- By contrast, Jesus praised the quality of humility, which helps us see clearly. It was one of the few qualities He called attention to in Himself, saying: “Behold, I am meek and lowly in heart.” We have therefore chosen the Beatitude of humility for this SFP skill: **“Blessed are the poor in spirit [*i.e. the humble*], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:3-ESV).

ASK: Why is it hard to love others if we are critical and fail to notice the good in them?

ASK: What counsel has God given to clean up our “eye” so we can see clearly? (*Forgive past offenses, abandon bigotry, repent of sin, and love others*)

ASK: How will the skill of training our brain to look for the good in each other help us become a better disciple of Jesus Christ?

BIBLICAL COMPANION

Lesson 2

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: “Blessed are those who mourn [*feel profound sorrow for sin*], for they will be comforted.”
(Matthew 5:4 - NIV)

LESSON SUMMARY: The foundation of good family communication is a respect for all person as equals. Families will learn good communication skills of: LUV Listening (Listen, Understand, Validate), using respectful “I-Messages”, being assertive instead of aggressive or passive, stop throwing “Communication Boulders,” and apologize when they make mistakes. Families also learn to hold a Weekly Family Meeting.

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS TO MASTER:

- 1 – Feel genuine respect for each other as equals.
- 2 - LUV Listen = Listen, Understand, Validate other people’s point of view (even if you disagree with them.)
- 3 - Use respectful “I-Message” to express yourself
- 4 - Avoid Communication Boulders (disrespectful ways of speaking to each other)
- 5 - It’s important, in a family, to regularly say “I love you” to each other and say “I’m sorry” when we make a mistake or offend: “When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you. . . first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”
(Matthew 5:23-24 NRSV)

GOD’S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

- 1- “God does not show favoritism.” (*Romans 2:11 – NIV*) “Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.” (*James 2:1 - NIV*)
- 2- “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” (*James 1:19 NIV*)
- 2a - “Agree with your adversary [*i.e. validate their point of view*] when you are in the way with him”.
(*Matthew 5:25 - KJV*)
- 2b- “. . . Lay aside...all evil speaking...” (*1Peter2:1*)
- 2c -“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth” (*Ephesians 4:29 KJV*).
- 3-“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (*Proverbs 15:1 - ESV*).
- 3b- “If your brother sin against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. . . If he will not listen, take one or two others along.”
(*Matt. 18:15-16 NIV*)
- 4 - “Rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” (*Colossians 3:8 ESV; see also 1 Peter 2:1*)
- 4a -“If you say, ‘Thou fool,’ you will be in danger of hellfire.” (*Matthew 5:12 NIV*)
- 4b - “If any man considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.”
(*James 1:26 - NIV*)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

EXPLAIN:

- Lesson 2 is about good Communication – listening and speaking to each other in ways that create love and understanding in a family, and also trying not to offend.

ASK: Why does God care how we speak to each other?

EXPLAIN:

- God covers the topic of communication in the Bible many times: “Be quick to hear, slow to speak” (James 1:19 NIV). “Keep a tight rein on your tongue” (James 1:26). “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). “The tongue is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. (James 3:6 EVS)

ASK: Why does the Apostle James say the tongue is like a fire?

EXPLAIN:

- The Apostle Peter counseled “He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Peter 3:10). This SFP lesson gives us the skills to follow the Apostle James’ admonition: “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion *is* vain” (James 1:26 KJV).
- This lesson teaches the skills to fulfill God’s commandment to speak respectfully to each other: The first skill is to LUV Listen, which stands for Listen, Understand, and Validate. Validating another person’s different point of view is discussed in the Sermon on the Mount: “Agree with thine adversary while thou art in the way with him.”
- Families also learn to be assertive instead of aggressive; and to avoid Communication Boulders – which are rude or harsh ways of speaking to each other when we are upset; or getting offended easily – which comes as a result of pride.

ASK: How does getting offended easily interfere with our ability to be Christ-like?

EXPLAIN:

- As part of good communication, Lesson 2 teaches families how to forgive others as Jesus taught in Matthew 6:14-15. It trains parents and children to apologize when they make mistakes, as Jesus taught in Matthew 6:14-15; and teaches us skills to repent, change our behavior, and talk nice to each other. To repent, we need to feel godly sorrow for past sinful ways of communicating. So for Lesson 2 we chose the Beatitude, “**Blessed are they that mourn [with godly sorrow for sin], for they shall be comforted.**”

BIBLICAL COMPANION

Lesson 3

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: “Blessed are the meek [*willing to obey God’s rules*], for they will Inherit the earth.”
(Matthew 5:5 - NIV)

LESSON SUMMARY: Families will learn five skills that contribute to a well-managed home, which helps children feel more emotionally secure. They are Rules, Rewards, Responsibilities, Routines, and happy family Rituals. Families will decide on Rules and Rewards in class, and if time is short, will work on establishing Responsibilities, Routines and happy family Rituals at home using the handouts and DVD.

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS TO MASTER:

1- As a family, decide on family Rules and commit to follow them.

2- Set up a system of Rewarding your children for good behavior.

3- Teach children to work and fulfill Responsibilities

4- Set up positive Routines (*set places to put things or set times and ways of doing things*) to have order in your life and home.

5. Establish happy family Rituals (*small kind ways of showing love to each other*).

GOD’S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

1- “Blessed are the meek [*those who obey God*], for they will inherit the earth.” (*Matthew 5:5 NIV*).

1a – “Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them.” (*1 John 3:24*)

2- “The Lord will command blessings upon you in all you undertake, if you keep His commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways.” (*Deuteronomy 28:8-9 - ESV*).

2a- “If you obey my commands you will [feel] my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in His love.” (*John 15: 10*)

3- “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food.” (*Genesis 3:19*) “Ye are the salt of the earth [*make a positive difference*].” (*Matthew 5:13 KJV*)

3a- “[Jesus] asked: ‘Why have you been standing here doing nothing the whole day long?. . . Go and work in my vineyard.’” (*Matthew 20:6–7*)

4. “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Come share your Master’s happiness!” (*Matthew 25:21 - NIV*)

5- “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (*2 Corinthians 13:11–12*)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

EXPLAIN

- **RULES:** In Lesson 3 we learn the importance of parents and children working together to make and follow good Family Rules. The ability to follow good rules or laws is an important life skills for both adults and children.
- God also has rules of for how we live and treat each other. What does God call His rules for a peaceful, stable society? (*Commandments*)

ASK: How can learning to make and follow good Family Rules help us live a more Christ-like life?

EXPLAIN

- **REWARDS:** Parents also need to set up a Reward System to reward children when they follow family rules or engage in pro-social behavior. If we look at how God “parents” us, we see that He also established a rewards system for good behavior.

ASK: How does God reward us? (*We abide in and feel His love –John 15:10; He also sends blessings*)

EXPLAIN

- **RESPONSIBILITIES:** Parents are also asked to teach their children how to work and fulfill responsibilities.

ASK: How can teaching children to work and fulfill Responsibilities help them become more faithful stewards?

EXPLAIN:

- **ROUTINES:** Families are encouraged to also make positive Routines, which are set ways of doing things or putting things, that help create order in the home.

ASK: What kind of Routines did God set up in nature?

EXPLAIN:

- **HAPPY LOVING RITUALS:** Families are encouraged to set up kind loving rituals, which are small loving ways of doing things together, or treating each other. These could be things like family prayer holding hands around the table before a meal, or back-rubs and songs before bed, or smiles and hugs when people return home for the day.

ASK: How can setting up effective Routines and loving Rituals help us have more peace and love in our home?

BIBLICAL COMPANION

Lesson 4

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." (Matthew 5:7 - NIV)

LESSON SUMMARY: Parents will learn skills to become nurturing care-givers by implementing the 7 Steps of Positive Discipline to train children in prosocial behaviors without resorting to punishment. Parents will teach the positive behaviors they want children to do using Positive Practice, and praise and reward them when they practice or do them. They will calmly and consistently give pre-determined, mild consequences when children misbehave, and express love afterwards. Children will learn the skills of "Accepting 'No' Nicely" and "Following Instructions."

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS TO MASTER:

- 1- Teach children the positive behaviors you want them to do and have them repeatedly practice it.
- 2- Harsh punishments put kids at risk for drug and alcohol use, mental illness, and lower I.Q.
- 3- Use MILD consistent negative consequences that are pre-decided by the family ahead of time according to the seriousness of the misbehavior.
- 4- Children learn and practice two important life skills: "Follow Instructions" & "Accept No Nicely."

GOD'S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

- 1- "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it."
(Proverbs 22:6 CEB)
- 2- The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy."
(Psalms 145:8)
2a- *(Jesus to the woman taken in adultery:)*
"Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."
(John 8:11 NIV)
- 3- "Fathers, do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged."
(Colossians 3:20-21 NIV)
- 4- Jesus began to preach, and to say: Repent."
(Matthew 4:17 KJV)
4a- "Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right."
(Ephesians 6:1 KJV)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

ASK: What counsel did the Lord give parents in Proverbs 22:6 ?

EXPLAIN:

- God said that "Children are an heritage of the LORD" (Psalms 127:3) who come from Him, and counseled parents to: "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6 CEB).

- The Apostle Paul described the kind of love parents need to have in order to train children and discipline effectively: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not selfish, it is not easily angered. . . . it always protects.”
- Jesus showed us how to give loving discipline when He offered correction to the woman caught in a grievous sin: “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more” (John 8:11 NIV).
- We have therefore chosen the Beatitude of being merciful for this lesson: **“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy”** (Matthew 5:7 - NIV).

EXPLAIN:

- Lesson 4 trains parents in the skill of using Positive Discipline --- a godly way to train children in pro-social behaviors that will benefit them all the rest of their lives. Prosocial behaviors are those things that benefit a person -- but also equally benefit society.
- In Positive Discipline, parents train children in the behaviors they want by teaching them the precise steps of the behavior, praising them while they practice the behavior in pretend situations, and rewarding them when they do the behaviors in real life. They also give short, mild negative consequences when children misbehave.
- This is similar to how God trains us – teaching us through His Word, rewarding us with love, peace, and blessings when we behave well – and when we choose to go contrary to His will, we withdraw ourselves from His loving spirit, which leaves us feeling sad or guilty; and we miss out on blessings He intended for us. (see Deuteronomy 11:26-28)
- Positive Discipline enables parents to avoid using harsh physical punishments, which have been shown to cause emotional harm to children – and are contrary to what Christ taught:

“Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6)

IMPORTANT NOTE TO TEACHERS: Some parents may have CONCERNS with the SFP emphasis on avoiding physical punishment due to Proverbs 13:24 (CEB) – “He who spares the rod hates their children; the one who loves them is careful to discipline.” OR Proverbs 19:18 KJV– “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” (*Different translations give other meaning to the verse.*)

IF SO, RESPOND WITH THIS QUESTION: **What is a “rod”?** In Isaiah 11:4 KJV– God refers to chastening us with the “rod of his mouth” – meaning he talks to His children and offers correction.

Punishment with a physical “rod” creates resentment that interferes with a child’s ability to feel bonded to a parent, which makes it less likely that the child will embrace a parent’s values. Physical punishment triggers a “fight or flight” mode in a child’s brain, with a rush of brain chemicals which, over time, has been shown to lowers a child’s IQ. That is NOT what God had in mind when He talked of “discipline” which comes from the word “to teach.” It is also contrary to effective training, where you teach and reward the behaviors you want and withdraw positive attention for misbehavior.

BIBLICAL COMPANION

Lesson 5

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:10 - NIV)

LESSON SUMMARY: Families will learn Problem Solving skills; Win-Win Negotiation skills, and Pre-Problem Solving skills. Pre-problem Solving trains kids to think ahead of things they may be asked to participate in, that could cause themselves problems if they did them, decide whether they are pro-social or anti-social activities, what the consequences could be, and practice the 5-C’s refusal skill to say ‘No’ to temptations in a way that helps them avoid harmful things and still keep their friends.

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS TO MASTER:

1- Use the 7- Steps to Effective Problem Solving handout to discuss and solve family problems when they occur.

2- Negotiate fairly when there is a disagreement – adopting the “Win-Win” attitude and skills– so both parties feel good about the decisions.

3- Think ahead about anti-social things you might get asked to do -- that could cause you problems if you did them – and decide to avoid them.

4- Practice ways to say “no” to antisocial behavior, including using alcohol or drugs, and still keep your friends.

GOD’S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

1- “Settle matters quickly with your adversary.”
(Matthew 5:25)

1a – ‘If. . . your brother has something against you...go and be reconciled to your brother.”
(Matthew 5:23-24 NRSV)

2- “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”
(Philippians 2:4 ESV)

2a -“You should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.” (Matthew 7:12 ESV)

2b- “Love does no harm to its neighbor.” (Romans 13:10 ESV)

3- “Be self-controlled and alert, for your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8 - NIV)

4- “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”
(James 4:7)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

EXPLAIN:

- Lesson 5 teaches three skills to make life easier and better for families: Problem-Solving, Win-Win Negotiation, and Pre-Problem Solving. Pre-problem Solving teaches kids to look ahead, think of the anti-social behaviors that could cause them problems, and decide how to avoid them.
- With Pre-problem Solving in mind, we chose the Beatitude: **“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:10 NIV). We chose this Beatitude because young people who are determined to live by prosocial values may be made fun of – and we want them to know to expect it and be prepared. Children are taught to practice and respond using the 5-C’s Refusal Skill.

EXPLAIN:

- Pre-problem Solving involves training children to think ahead and make a list of the possible antisocial temptations that could assault them – and pre-plan ways to avoid them. This helps them fulfil God’s command to: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

ASK: How could this skill help both parents and children avoid temptations and problems?

- One of the Christian themes that goes well with the skill of Win-Win Negotiation – which is making sure that the other person is equally satisfied with the results of the negotiation) are Jesus’ directives in how to treat and get along with others. He said:

*“You should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you.”
(Matthew 7:12 - CEB)*

“If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift at the altar, and go: First make things right with your brother or sister and then come back and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24 CEB).

ASK: How could using the skill of Win-Win Negotiation help you have more peace in your family?

BIBLICAL COMPANION

Lesson 6

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."
(Matthew 5:9 KJV)

LESSON SUMMARY: Families will learn how to reduce stress in their lives and how to trigger their own "Relaxation Response" to lower their body's response to stress. Families will also learn good anger management skills by noticing and tracking their anger triggers and cues, reducing the "Hot Thoughts" that fuel anger; and re-programming their brains with new, better responses to anger triggers.

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS TO MASTER:

- 1- Learn and practice ways to reduce your stress because it makes you more likely to get angry.
- 2- Notice and track the things that trigger your anger
- 3- Learn and use good anger management skills to re-program your brain and tame the Anger Monster we all have to one degree or another
- 4- Make an "assertive complaint" if you have been wronged.

GOD'S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

- 1- "Let every person be . . . slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (*James 1:20*)
- 1-"A hot-tempered man stirs up strife; but he who is slow to anger quiets contention." (*Proverbs 15:18 NIV*)
- 2- "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (*Matthew 5:9 NIV*)
- 3- "Everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment." (*Matthew 5:22 ESV*)
- 4- "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." (*Luke 17:3 KJV*)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

EXPLAIN:

- Lesson 6 teaches the skills of stress and anger management, and teaches how to track our anger triggers, our "Hot Thoughts" that fuel our anger, and re-wire our brain's anger response with pro-social responses.
- We have therefore chosen to highlight the Beatitude, "**Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God**" (Matthew 5:9)

ASK: How does an inability to manage our anger interfere with our ability to develop charity and be Christ-like?

EXPLAIN:

- We see in the scriptures two types of anger – righteousness indignation against social evils, (which Jesus displayed when he drove the money changers -- who were cheating people – out of the Temple; and personal anger because of some offense (which Christ did not display – even when he was mocked, cheated or mistreated.) Jesus instructed us that it is better to take offenses than give them; and instructed us to “Turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:40).

ASK: What belief and skill do we need in order to “turn the other cheek” when someone offends us?

(The belief that their poor behavior is harming themselves more than us. We also need the skills to ask thoughtful questions like: “Did you really mean what you just said?” OR: “I have the feeling I am being taken advantage of. Can you tell me how I am wrong about that?”

- The Lord was also very frank in His commands to control our anger:
“I say to you that everyone who is angry with their brother or sister will be in danger of judgment. If they say to their brother or sister, ‘You idiot,’ they will be in danger of being condemned by the governing council. And if they say, ‘You fool,’ they will be in danger of fiery hell” (CEB).

EXPLAIN:

- Families also learn in this lesson to make an “assertive complaint” when there are legitimate offenses that need to be addressed, as Jesus instructed when He said: “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault...” (Matthew 18:15)
- The SFP Mindfulness section in the Introduction lessons teach parents and children to use the Breath Awareness exercise to calm their anger responses and trigger their own physical Relaxation Response, which helps curb the intensity our anger.

Lesson 7

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled.”
(Matthew 5:6 - NIV)

LESSON SUMMARY: Families learn how to set Goals and make Contracts for Change to achieve goals and improve behavior. Families will also learn to give and receive Positive Criticism that builds instead of discourages. Parents are to hold regular Pleasant Personal Conferences with their children, and to help children manage time, develop impulse control, strive to do well in school, and spend money wisely.

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS TO MASTER:

- 1- Think about what is most important to you in life and set long and short-term goals to accomplish them. List the steps it would take to do them. Read your goal list daily, track progress.
- 2- Use Contracts of Change to replace our negative behaviors with positive ones.
3. Teach and use the skills of giving Positive Criticism and Delivering Difficult Feedback to help children (and adults) correct their behavior.
- 4- Hold Pleasant Personal Conferences with each child on a regular basis. Begin by expressing love and specific praise. Ask if they are happy. Use SFP skills of Positive Criticism & Delivering Difficult Feedback so children leave happy and hopeful.
- 5- Help children manage time, develop impulse control, strive to do well in school, and spend money wisely. *(see also Romans 13:8-10 for a positive life definition)*

GOD’S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

- 1- As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” *(Colossians 2:6)*
1a - Luke 14:34 – *ideas to plan your Christian life.*
- 2- “Lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently. . . . not in drunkenness, nor sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” *(Romans 13:13-14 - ESV)*
2a - “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out...If your right hand offend you, cut it off.” *(Matthew 5:29-30)*
2b - “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” *(Philippians 4:13)*
- 3- “Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? . . . First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.” *(Matthew 7:3-5 - NRSV)*
3a - “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” *(John 7:24)*
3b- “If your brother sin against you, go and show him his fault between the two of you” *(Matt. 18:15)*
- 4 - “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” *(1 Samuel 16:7)*
5. “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.” *(Micah 6:8 - ESV)*

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

EXPLAIN:

- Lesson 7 teaches families to set Goals and make Contracts for Change to achieve goals and improve behavior. Families will also learn to give and receive Positive Criticism that builds instead of discourages. Parents will learn to help children manage time, develop impulse control, strive to do well in school, and spend money wisely.
- The Beatitude for this lesson explains the type of desire we need to change our behavior and be more righteous. **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled.”** (Matthew 5:6 - NIV)

ASK: How does Jesus describe the feelings we need to be able to change behavior and become more like Him?

ASK: Why is thoughtfully choosing our life goals with a Christian focus helpful to us?

ASK: What does the scripture (*above*) mean, to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”?

EXPLAIN:

- If our eye of awareness is faulty, critical, approves of sin, or is too full of our own self-importance, we can't see clearly, and we will judge wrongly. That is not helpful to others or our own discipleship.
- We know we can change our brain and our eye of awareness -- the way we look at the world -- by practicing being non-judgmental during our Mindfulness training, and choosing to follow Christ's example and love as He does.

ASK: How does choosing to love others as Jesus loves change our way of viewing others?

ASK: How can the attitudes and skills in this lesson help us become more faithful stewards over our time and talents?

BIBLICAL COMPANION

Lesson 8

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8 KJV)

LESSON SUMMARY: Families learn how alcohol harms the developing teen brain, including the white matter, good judgment, memory, and the Pleasure Motivation System. Alcohol also shuts down the part of the brain that cares if you make a mistake, which is why kids on alcohol will do risky things they would not do if sober. Parents learn the 3 types of skills they need to help prevent underage drinking and drug use: Bonding, setting Boundaries, and Monitoring to see that young people always stay in an alcohol and drug-free social environment. Parents learn to ask the 5-W monitoring questions before kids leave home, and also review the 5-Cs refusal skill that enables kids to say “No” to drinking and drugs – and still keep their friends.

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS TO MASTER:

1- Alcohol, tobacco and drugs (including other people’s prescription pain pills) are addicting, and will harm the memory, good judgement, and Pleasure-Motivation parts of a teen’s brain. Alcohol also destroys brain cells that produce pleasure. Your brain is not fully developed until age 25. Don’t be tricked by friends or false advertising – use can lead to brain-malfunction, addiction and misery.

2- Parents must use the skills of Bonding (creating warm and loving family relationships); setting clear, firm Boundaries against use by explaining the brain-harms establishing consequences; and Monitoring their teens’ activities to help youth avoid alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and delinquent behavior.

3- Using the 5-C’s Refusal Skill will empower children to set their own personal Boundaries and say ‘no’ to harmful things they are invited to do, and still stay friends.

GOD’S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

1- “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.”
(1 Corinthians 6:19 – ESV).

1a -“Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:11)

1b - “The LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink. . . it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.” (Leviticus 10:8-9)

1c- “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8 KJV)

2-“Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.”
(Romans 12:9 - ESV).

3-“Do not love the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of God is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust from his eyes – comes not from the Father but from the world.”
(1 John 2:15-16)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

EXPLAIN:

- Lesson 8 teaches that most adult addiction began in adolescence, and can be prevented with trained, nurturing parents, and youth who make a conscience choice to avoid addicting substances.
- Families will learn how alcohol, tobacco, and drugs are neuro-toxic chemicals that harm teen brain development, and can cause early addiction, and result in reckless behavior.
- For this lesson we have chosen the Beatitude, **“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”** The heart, in this sense, refers to our emotional feeling center. Our heart is surrounded with 40 million neurons that are connected to our brain and are part of our brain’s Pleasure Motivation System, which helps direct our behavior.
- Alcohol, tobacco and drugs are brain toxic chemicals that hijack the brain’s Pleasure Motivation System, triggering a feeling of pleasure from a harmful chemical instead of a real experience. Teens are much more likely to become addicted than adults – and their brain permanently altered by using these harmful chemicals. This negative .
- The good news is that parents who learn and practice the skills of Bonding (creating warm, loving relationships, Setting clear, firm Boundaries against use, and Monitoring teens activities can help youth avoid the environments and temptations to use.

ASK: Why is it also important for Christian youth to make their own conscience choice to avoid addicting substances?

EXPLAIN

- This SFP lesson gives suggestions on how to follow the counsel to protect our bodies from harmful substances, for they are a gift from God -- a temple in which His Light and spirit can dwell – and should not be defiled (2 Cor. 6:16).
- Youth will again practice the 5-C’s refusal skill, a fun and effective way to courageously say “No” to harmful things and still keep their friends.

BIBLICAL COMPANION

Lesson 9

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, because great is your reward in heaven."
(Matthew 5:11-12 KJV)

LESSON SUMMARY: Peer pressure by friends who use is the number-one reason kids drink or use drugs. It is vital for parents to help children identify and choose good friends, who will help them stay alcohol and drug free. Parents need to monitor kids' activities to see they always stay in alcohol & drug-free social environment, and share their "No alcohol or Drugs" rule with their children's friends' parents. Parents also need to monitor their child's emotional well-being with regular Pleasant Personal Conferences and asking, "Are you happy?" Parents need to assess their kids' risk factors for using alcohol, tobacco, or drugs, take steps to protect them from using; and practice the 5-Cs Refusal skill with them often.

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS TO MASTER:

- 1- Parents and children learn the importance of choosing good friends who will help them stay out of trouble.
- 2- Children need to be a good friend to others by encouraging them to stay away from alcohol, tobacco, drugs and anti-social activities.
- 3- Parents are to monitor their children's friends, activities, and discuss their "No alcohol or drugs" rule with their teens' friends' parents. Parents also need to listen and monitor their children's emotional well-being, by asking if they are happy.
4. Children need to have the courage to be a good example, and practice and use the 5-C's Refusal Skill to say "no" to harmful, anti-social activities. The 5-C's will help them still keep their friends.
5. Children need to have the courage to be a good example, to avoid bullying, stand up for those who are being bullied.

GOD'S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

- 1- "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers."
(2 Corinthians 6:14 NIV) -"Have no fellowship with the unfaithful works of darkness..." (Ephesians 5:11 NIV)
- 2- "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you, to give a reason for the hope that is in you. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).
- 3- 'Keep away from every brother. . . .who does not live according to the teaching you received from us." (2 Thessalonians 3:6 – NIV)
- 4 - "Come out from among [the wicked] and be separate, touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you." (2 Corinthians. 6:17 - NIV)
- 5- "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12 NIV)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

EXPLAIN:

- Lesson 9 counsels youth to look for and choose good friends who will help them become their highest and best self; and in turn be a good friend to others, to encourage them to also stay alcohol and drug free. The counsel to not be unequally yoked with non-believers has merit, because research shows that if a teen's friends are into drinking or using drugs, he or she will most likely follow their example. Youth are also counseled not to bully others, and a handout gives tips to stop bullying – for the bully, the bystander, and the person being bullied.

ASK: Why does our choice of friends have such a large impact on who we become?

- This lesson also trains parents in the skill of Monitoring their children's activities – to see that their children (and especially teens) always stay in an alcohol and drug free social environment.
- Parents also need to monitor their children's emotional well-being, by asking if they are happy in life, because some youth will use alcohol or drugs to self-medicate with harmful, neuro-toxic chemicals when they are feeling depressed. We learn from this lesson that monitoring our children is one of a parent's most important stewardships.
- We have chosen for this lesson a Beatitude that encourages both parents and children to have courage to take insults for Christ when they are mocked for prosocial choices. **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven”** (Matthew 5:12).

ASK: What kind of attitudes does Jesus tell us to have if we are persecuted for living true to His teachings?

CONFIRM:

- This Beatitude lets us know that if friends persecute you for righteousness choices, to be glad – you're in good company, for you qualify to have fellowship with God.

BIBLICAL COMPANION

Lesson 10

SFP SKILLS THAT EMPOWER US TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

BEATITUDE: “-“You are the salt of the earth. . . You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.”
(Matthew 5:13-16 - CEB)

LESSON SUMMARY: Families learn the importance of Prosocial Values, Fun Family Traditions, and giving Service. Family traditions create bonding moments and can reinforce family values. Research shows that children who are taught pro-social values are less likely to use alcohol or drugs, or engage in antisocial behavior. Positive values help create a stable society. Children receive many gifts from a stable society, and they need to learn to appreciate them, and give back by rendering service. Children have the power within themselves to do good and be an agent of change in their families & schools. (NOTE: Included in Lesson 10 are optional handouts listing the skills needed to create a stable family.)

SFP ATTITUDES & SKILLS TO MASTER:

1- Make fun family traditions to celebrate what is important to you.

2- Parents need to share their prosocial values with their children. (*Romans 13:9-10 and Leviticus 19:11–19 describes main ones.*)

3- Look for ways to do good and give service in the family and in your community.

4- Parents and children can set an example and be a positive agent for change in their homes, schools, and communities. This includes not gossiping, bullying, or making fun of others

GOD’S WORDS TO MEMORIZE:

1- “Let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise. . . . Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.” (*Psalms 95:1–3 NIV*)

2 - “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father. . . .
(1 John 2: 17 KJV)

3 - “As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone (Galatians 6:10 ESV).
3a - “Be not weary in well doing.” (*2 Thess. 3:13 KJV*)

4. “Be blameless without murmuring; in the midst the wicked world, shine as lights in the world.”
(*Philippians 2:14-15 NIV*)

5 - He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.” (*1 Peter 3:10 NIV*)

KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE & QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

EXPLAIN:

- Lesson 10 teaches the importance of establishing fun family traditions, sharing prosocial values and giving service—all of which promote Bonding, and help establish Boundaries. Included in the SFP DVD is a lesson on avoiding pornography.
- For this Beatitude we have chosen Christ’s command to become “... **the salt of the earth..... and the light of the world**” (Matthew 5:13-16)
- **Fun Family Traditions** let us find joy and celebrate what is important to us – and are happy things to look forward to.
- **Giving Service** is a pro-social behavior that makes us feel happier. We are reminded of Christ’s words to serve one another as Christ has served us. “By love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13)

ASK: Why is it important for parents to share their Christian values with their children?

- False values are so prominent in today’s culture that parents need to actively and continuously teach their children true values to counteract the antisocial bombardment they face. If our eye – which is an extension of our brain that looks out to see the world -- is evil (meaning we have false views and values that are not in harmony with God’s will and ways), then our body will be full of spiritual darkness – and we will feel depressed. (Matthew 6:22-23)
- Yet if our views and values are in harmony with God’s our bodies can be filled with his spiritual light – and we will feel happier and more at peace.
- “All thy children will be taught of the Lord and great will be the peace of thy children. (Is.54:13)

ASK: What are some of the benefits of living true to your Christian values?

Jesus said: “My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27) “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

CONCLUSION:

If put into practice, the skills in the Strengthening Families Program will enable people to more fully follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, which empowers them to abide in God’s love, and walk in the “strait and narrow [i.e. precise] path” (*Matt. 7:13–14 - KJV*) that leads to eternal life in His joyful Presence.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. . . .If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love. (John 15:7,10)