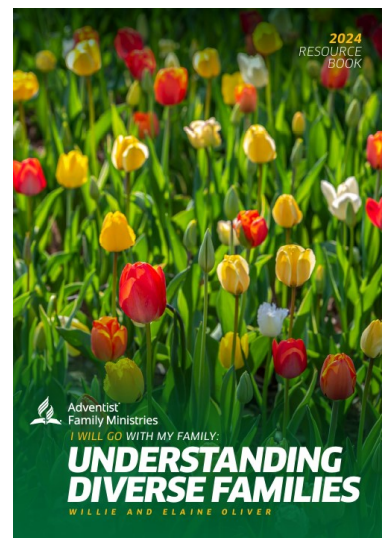


I Will Go with My Family: Understanding Diverse Families - 2024 Resource book

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In John 17:20-23, the beloved disciple records one of the last prayers of Jesus, that His followers would be known for their love for each other; that their relationship would look like the kind of harmony He shared with His heavenly Father.

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.” (NLT)



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In this prayer Jesus directed His attention to future generations of believers. He was praying for us and for believers who will come after us. His main concern in this prayer was for the unity of His followers, established on His unity with His Father (John 10:30, 38; 14:10, 20). In concert with love (John 15:12-13; 17:26), unity is uppermost in the life of believers because it displays the reconciling power of the ministry of Jesus in the world (John 17:21; cf. v. 23).

Remarkably, the great commission is about “making disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19); “every nation and tribe and tongue and people” (Rev. 14:6). Yet, the more differences there are among peoples, the higher the probability of misunderstandings and disagreements. Of course—as disciples of Jesus—it is our privilege to represent Him. However, what represents Jesus to the world is our “love for one another” (John 13:34-35). This kind of love is best modeled in family relationships; especially in the kind of family that has decided to live by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23), rather than engaging in “the works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-21).

Given the diversity of families in our congregations—married, single, divorced, widowed, never married, older, younger, with children, without children, disabled, neurodivergent and more—there is a high probability for tension, disaffection, apathy, and alienation. Still, “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26; Mk. 10:27), as we trust Him to help us to “be holy as He is holy” (1 Peter 1:15, 16; Lev. 11:45).

Our prayer is that the 2024 Adventist Family Ministries Resource Book titled Understanding Diverse Families will serve as a valuable resource for pastors, Family Ministries leaders, and disciple-makers dedicated to supporting families navigate the chasm of difference with the heart of Jesus. That by so doing, all will be able to answer the prayer of Jesus to be one with each other, and be able to live out the vision of I Will Go with My Family.

Maranatha!