



Teaching, exercises and activities to help you  
build a healthy, loving, strong family.



Written by John and Jennifer Atkinson  
Use and copying allowed with proper citing of authors and  
Gateway Community Church



# Family of Origin

---

## **What is the goal of this exercise?**

To respond to your family of origin experience in a redemptive way with Christ's perspective, love and renewal.

Romans 8:15-17

15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

## **Where do you come from?**

There has been a great deal of renewed interest in our geneological past in the last few years. Web sites that will trace a persons lineage have seen a surge of interest.

Our immediate famly of origin has a tremendous impact on who we are. Even if we try to build an identity apart from them, their influence stays with us throughout our life.

We know that a healthy family with loving parents can build security, strength, integrity and love. When things go awry, strong famlies find a way to respond in a healthy way with love, support and intervention when needed.

The big question is how do we respond to our family of origin experience? We can have great experiences that we take for granted or tough experiences and seek healing and renewal from the damage.

There are some specific areas where families of origin leave a lasting impact on us including:

The values that we live by

A sense of personal identity

Life habits

Our understanding of the nature of relationships



# Family of Origin Exercise 1

---

Psalm 103:17

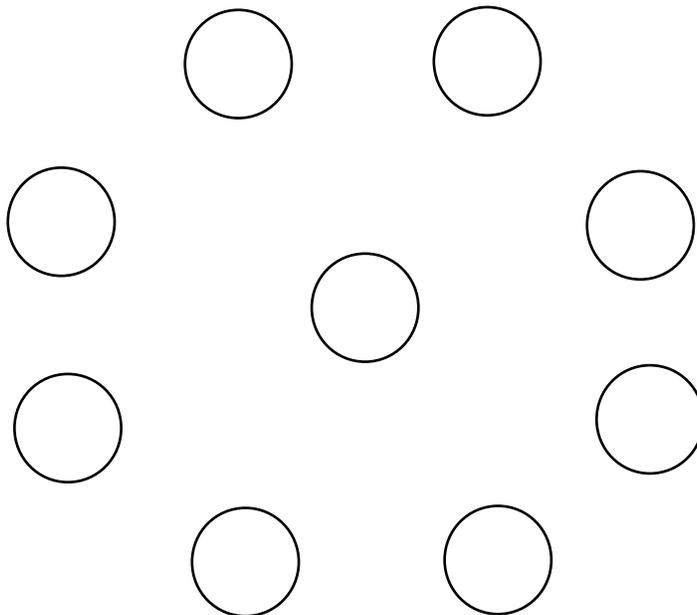
The Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children...

Understanding where you come from:

Exercise:

Each circle below represents a member of your family of origin, those you grew up with. You are the center circle. Write a name or letter in each circle to represent a person from your family of origin (you can add or ignore circles as needed).

For this exercise you will need to draw a line between you and each person in your family of origin. Place a solid line for those relationships you consider to be healthy or strong and a dotted line for those you consider to be broken or weak. If it is mixed, use both a solid line and a dotted line.



Now write a word or two that describes each relationship on the lines you drew, dotted or solid. Which relationships were the most formative for you? Which ones bring back the strongest memories or emotions?

What can you be thankful for from your family?

Is there hurt, damage or abuse associated with anyone?

Spend time praying for each relationship and then each person. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom about how our family has shaped you. Ask God to heal what needs to be healed. Pray that he will help you forgive what needs to be forgiven, to seek forgiveness as needed and to appreciate and celebrate the blessings that came from your family. Ask God to help make your response to your family of origin a redemptive experience.



## Family of Origin Exercise 2

---

Psalm 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go,  
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.

### Values:

What did your family of origin value the most? What did you learn to value Success? Money? Appearances? People? Integrity? (Read Galatians 5:22-23)

What were the most important values you learned from your family of origin? List them here.

How have those things helped you and/or hurt you in life? How have they translated to your own family or relationship?

God has given us values to live by that will guide us in our response to our world. They are values of love, grace, truth, integrity, hope, valuing people over material things to name a few.

Are there earthly values that you have developed that you need to let go of? What Godly values do you need add to your life?

Psalm 139:13

### Identity:

For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Write a few sentences on how you view yourself. How would you describe your identity as a person?

What was your identity in your family? How was it reinforced in your family of origin?

God creates us with inherent value and purpose. He views us as His children and desires us to know the fullness of life found in Jesus Christ. (Psalm 139:13-14)

Do you struggle with your identity as a person? You can find the strongest fullest identity in God's family by living as a devoted follower of Jesus and accepting your place in His family.



## Family of Origin Exercise 3

---

1 Timothy 3:2-4

2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect

### **Habits:**

What were your families habits, culture or traditions? It could be how you keep your house, how you celebrate holidays, how you talk to each other, how you handle chores or the way you handle meals.

How has that affected your habits?

Are there habits that you would like to change or break free of? Are there habits that you want to remember and carry on in your life and family?

### **Nature of relationships:**

How did your family handle their relationships? How did they communicate? Handle conflict? Show commitment to each other, or not show it? How did they value or not value each other?

How has your family of origin experience affected your relationships? How has it affected your assumptions and expectations in relationship?

What was healthy in your background in regards to relationships? Is there anything that you learned and experienced in your family of origin, regarding relationships, that you want to change?