

## **A Family, Home, or Group Blessing to Learn and Practice** *Suggested by Barbara J. Newman*

### **An Opportunity:**

What will those in your home remember from this time? Some of us live with parents and children. Others may live with roommates or with residents and caregivers. Whatever that looks like for you, many of us are spending significant time together at home. What a great time to bank up a family storehouse of sayings, songs, Scripture, practices, and more.

I want to introduce you to a blessing you could memorize together (or even act out together for younger children or persons with challenges in speaking). It may be something you could say often to one another now. It could be part of each bedtime or a response when you see someone in your home become a bit anxious. It might also be something that will last long beyond this time to family birthdays, weddings, graduations, a mealtime event or an informal gathering. I was introduced to this blessing through Dr. Neal Plantinga, president emeritus of Calvin Theological Seminary.

*God go before you to lead you,*

*God go behind you to protect you,*

*God go beneath you to support you,*

*God go beside you to befriend you.*

*Do not be afraid.*

*May the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you.*

*Do not be afraid.*

*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*

*Amen.*

### **Ideas for memorization:**

1. Consider putting hand motions with the phrases. For example, “God go before you to lead you” might be shown by placing both hands in front of you. “God go beneath you to support you” might be having people touch the floor. “May the blessing...” might be having hands stretched out to one another in the group. Family members might have great actions to suggest as you make this your own blessing.
2. Consider having one person be the “leader” and the others repeat the leader’s words. If you have a person in your home who has challenges with speaking, count on that group member to say one of the words or to lead out with the motion for each phrase.
3. Make a wall mural in your home. Write each phrase on a piece of paper and ask family members to illustrate that phrase. Hang up each piece of paper to make the whole blessing.

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4. This blessing always reminds me of a box. If you have a family member who may struggle with speaking or doing motions, consider using a box (that the individual sees as a safe spot) and putting that person in the box or laundry basket or taped square on the floor as you touch the front, back, bottom, and sides of the “box” as a group. Let that family member serve as the illustration and center of God’s care for your home group.

### **Ways to extend the blessing:**

1. While we may do “caroling” at Christmas, perhaps (if it’s permitted and safe) you could do a neighborhood walk, stopping in front of each house and speaking that blessing over each residence – whether they can hear it or not.
2. Consider making up family or house cards with that blessing printed inside. Personalize them and send them to people who may benefit from reading those words and getting a card in the mail.
3. If you have a way to make a family or house video, consider recording this blessing and posting it on social media.
4. What other blessings can you find in the Bible? Do a little research and grow your “blessing bank” together as a family.
5. Pray together about how God might use you to bring this blessing to others. What does it mean right now to “go in peace to love and serve the Lord”? Then be ready to be obedient!

If you want to read more about where this blessing came from, here is a great link that gives some history:

[worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/neal-plantinga-on-his-god-go-before-you-blessing/](http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/neal-plantinga-on-his-god-go-before-you-blessing/)