

Building Strong Family Ties:

Part 1: What Is A Family For?

There are many forces at work today to change the family scene. There are a lot of voices saying that the family is finished, it has no future in today's society; the family is out of date, a thing of the past.

Let me assure you that the family is *not* finished – it is simply fragile, so it needs strengthening.

What does the Bible say about the family?

Genesis 2:18, 24 [Good News Bible] *“Then the Lord God said, it is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him...” “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife.”*

Notice two things:-

1 The family was God's idea, it is His institution, so it will always be around because it is the building block of strong stable society.

2 God, who made Adam, put him in a perfect environment with everything he wanted, but God still said, “it is not good for man to be alone.”

This is true whether we are married or single. People were made to need people. **We need relationships, deep relationships and caring people in our lives.**

What is the family for?

The family is a shelter for storms

Proverbs 14:26 [Living Bible] *“Reverence for God gives a man deep strength; his children have a place of refuge and security.”*

Three kinds of storm we face in life

- a) **Change** – we all go through changes in life.
- b) **Failure** – you have probably realised by now that we are not always the winner in life.
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 [Living Bible] *“Two can accomplish more than twice as much as one. For the results can be much better. If one falls, the other pulls him up, but if a man falls when he is alone, he's in trouble.”*
- c) **Rejection** – we all hate to be rejected, ridiculed, criticised.
The goal of most games we play is to get “home”, for when we do, we are safe: **homes were meant for safety.**

What should be our response to this?

Demonstrate our love. We love our family but this has to be demonstrated in a way they can recognise.

- a) **Hear** – listen to their hurts **with total eye to eye contact.**

- b) **Hug** – give the therapy of touch.
- c) **Help** – guide them to a solution to their hurt.

That is why divorce is so painful; because the place of acceptance becomes this place of rejection. The shelter from the storm becomes the centre of the storm.

A family is a learning centre for life

This is a multi way learning zone: children from parents, but also parents from children, husbands from wives, wives from husbands.

Psalms 144:12 [Good News Bible] *“May our sons in their youth be like plants that grow up strong [the family is often likened to a garden in the Bible because it is a place to grow people] may our daughters be like stately pillars which adorn the corners of a palace.”*

Ephesians 6:4 [Living Bible] *“And now a word to you parents. Don’t keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather, bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord Himself approves, with suggestions and Godly advice.”*

Ephesians 6:4 [NIV] *“Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”*

Luke 2:52 [NIV] *“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.”*

Note Jesus grew in four ways: a) wisdom – intellectual growth; b) stature – physical growth; c) favour with God – spiritual growth; d) favour with man – social growth.

This should be the goal for our family, that they grow in these four ways.

Three things we don’t leave our family without gaining

- a) **Relationships** – Home is where we learn to work out our relationship problems in an atmosphere of love.
- b) **Character** – much of what we are as adults we picked up from our parents. **Character is caught not taught.**
- c) **Values** – what is important. We learn our attitude to work, sex, time, money, play, other people and God at home.

Isaiah 38:19 [Living Bible] *“One generation makes known your [God’s] faithfulness to the next.”*

Life is like a relay race and each of us is passing the baton onto the next generation having received it from a previous generation.

What then are we passing on to our children?

If we are not teaching our family about God we are making a major mistake that has eternal implications. The Bible tells us that if we are a parent, teaching values to our children is part of our job description.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 [Living Bible] *“And you must think constantly about these commandments I am giving you today. You must teach them to your children and talk about them when you are at home or out for a walk; at bedtime and the first thing in the morning.”*

You know why we are not doing this anymore? Because instead we watch TV.

Who or what then is really influencing the values of our children, who will then pass those values on to their children?

What is our response to this?

We need to ask *'what values am I intentionally or unintentionally teaching my children?'*

Then ask *'is this what I really want them to learn? What heritage do I want them to have?'*

The family is also a place to play

I like this one. The family is a format for fun, a haven for happiness. The family is a place to enjoy life. This is missing in a lot of homes.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 [NIV] *"Enjoy life with your wife whom you love..."*

That's one of my favourite verses in the Bible; that's one command I'm obeying wholeheartedly.

Proverbs 5:18 [Good News Bible] *"So be happy with your wife and find your joy with the girl you married"* [hopefully that is the same person].

You may have heard the saying *"the family that prays together stays together."*

Well, it is also true *"the family that plays together stays together."*

Lighten up. Have fun with your children.

If we don't have fun with our children we shouldn't be surprised that when they grow up they don't care to come back and visit very often. Children want to be where the fun is.

What should be our response?

We should demonstrate our love, evaluate our values, but also celebrate our families.

Psalms 127:3-5 [Living Bible] *"Children are a gift from God; they are His reward, children born to a young man are like sharp arrows. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them."*

Children are a gift from God and we should be increasingly aware that our children are only with us for a short season: they are not going to be around for very long.

Make this short time last, make it count. There is always plenty of time to have other projects.

The family is also a launch-pad for service

We may not have thought of our family as a servicing team, but serving others as a family team will bring more unity and joy to our family than anything else we can do. Have projects to serve others in need as a family team.

1 Corinthians 16:15 [Living Bible] *"Stephanas and his family, they were first to become Christians in Greece and they are spending their lives helping and serving Christians everywhere."*

What a great goal. What a great example of Christian love!

A family working together for a single project binds that family close together. The ultimate basis for harmony and joy in the family is the next verses...

Acts 16:32-34 [Good News Bible] *“Then they [Paul and Silas] preached the Word of God to him and to all the others in his house. At that very hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds and he and his family were baptised at once. Then he took Paul and Silas up into his house and gave them some food to eat. He and his family were filled with joy, because they now believed in God.”*

This is the “bottom line” when the whole family believes in God and serves God by serving others it is a unifying and joy filled factor.

Romans 12:13 [Living Bible] *“When God’s children are in need, you be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or if they need lodging for the night.”*

Hospitality can be a family team project.

We have been talking about the ideal family, but there are no perfect families.

Why? Because there are no perfect people.

What about single people?

not married, widowed or separated

- a) **Do not ignore the relatives we do have.** Brothers, sisters, mothers or fathers who are alive at this point of your life.
- b) **Realise that as a believer you become part of a spiritual family.**

Galatians 6:10 [Good News Bible] *“So then, as often as we have the chance, we should be good to everyone, and especially to those who belong to our family in the faith.”*

The church is just a larger family, a larger expression of what should be happening in our smaller personal family.

Therefore commit yourself to a local family church where the practical truth of God’s Word is taught.

Remember then:-

The Church is to be a shelter from storms.

The Church is to be a learning centre for life.

The Church is to be a place where you have fun and fellowship.

The Church is to be a launch-pad for service.

So if you do not have a natural family near you make a church your family.