

God and the Rest of the Week

Title: Part 1 – Family Matters

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Transition: Paul Prays & Seats

As you guys are saying “Hi,” I want to welcome everyone hanging out with us on our app or social channels. Thanks for stopping by! We want you to know we are FOR you so let us know how we can serve you or pray for you. And if this message blesses you then share it with a friend.

I am really excited today because we are beginning a new collection of messages that I am so passionate about called “God and the Rest of the Week.” I believe this will be insanely practical over the next 4, 5 maybe 6 weeks so help me preach my message, turn to someone you just said “Hi” to and tell them “**God wants to be a part of the REST of your week.**”

The big idea behind this is that we tend to ghetto God into a couple of hours on the weekend but then the rest of the week we are busy running our lives. Maybe you say a prayer somewhere along the way Monday through Saturday, maybe you open the Bible app, maybe you share a verse on social, but God is not really a big part of the REST of your week. I think all of us if we are honest have lived that way at one time or another. It's a weird tension. We want God to be a part of our lives, but either because of fear or busyness or maybe because we just haven't learned that there is more, for whatever reason we kind of ghetto God into a Sunday ritual.

AND the goal of saying that is not to make anyone feel guilty, God doesn't want to be in the REST of your week because you feel some sense of obligation. My goal in highlighting this or elevating this tension is because God wants to be so much more to you and has so much more for you! He wants to be so much more TO you and has so much more FOR you!

In fact, 39 out of the 40 parables of Jesus that we have recorded took place outside of church or a religious setting. Almost all of them had to do with the marketplace or family or finances... things like that. All the REST of the week stuff. He didn't tell a lot of stories about people in church. He told stories about people going about their lives and how God's Kingdom intersects with that.

AND here's why. Jesus is called our Good Shepherd. I know it's not an analogy we have a lot of familiarity with today, but the point is when sheep follow their shepherd they find pasture. Right? They find life! Life doesn't magically come to us. We have to make ourselves available to it! If you and I want to experience the rest of God then we have to make ourselves available to God the REST of the week. If we want to experience the full and abundant kind of life God has for us then we have to learn to follow in the 167 hours we are not in church.

SO, over the next 4 or 5 weeks we are going to dive into this in the areas that consume us outside of church, things like work, family, our schedules, finances and here is my challenge. See if a commitment doesn't rise up inside of you to be here every week for the next 4 weeks. I know you can catch this content on our app or social channels but if we are learning together how to follow God in the rest of our week then let's at least begin the week off right in His house, amen?

Today, to kick things off, I thought we would begin by exploring how God's Kingdom intersects with our families. The title of my message is this:

Family Matters

Turn to someone and asking them, “Did I do that?” Where are my children of the 90's? If you have a Bible with you or on your device head to Psalm 127.

As you are looking for that, a couple quick disclaimers. One I know not everyone has a family of their own. We all come from a family but not all of us have a family. So, I see you, and want you to know God still has something for you in this area of life. Maybe you are an aunt or uncle, a teacher, a volunteer in our kids ministry, or if you are a student you will most likely have a family one day down the road. Regardless, the church family is called to help raise the next generation and you have a role to play. Don't tune out and miss what God has for you today.

My second disclaimer is this. Whenever you teach something, rightly so or not, people assume you are an expert or proficient at whatever topic you are speaking about. But as I have said before, when it comes to family and parenting, I am just one beggar showing other beggars where to find scraps of food. If you asked me right before we had kids if I had any advice I would have told you tons. If you ask me after doing this for 12 years now I would tell you I have none, right? You might identify with this but the longer that I parent the less confident I become in my parenting abilities. Amen?

BUT that's the great thing about seeking God in the rest of the week. He has so much for us to lean on. So, let's jump into it. If you have **Psalm 127** we will begin in verse one. Here is what King David's son Solomon writes:

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. ² It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. ³ Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. ⁵ Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!

Solomon was wise in the way that he wrote B/C he constantly used word pictures. He didn't just say "Don't be lazy," he said look at the ant, look how hard they work. They have food because they work. So, instead of just saying kids are important, here's some things you should do blah blah blah, instead he says kids are like arrows in the hands of a warrior. Now, suddenly every home becomes a quiver, now the job of a parent is to be a warrior! Now, our mind is firing on all cylinders, right?

So, what should we be focusing on as a family, as parents? To borrow from Psalm 127, what is the target or the bullseye for the family? What is the goal for raising kids if we want to bring God into the rest of the week because verse 1 clearly says "*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.*" Do you ever feel like all of your effort is in vain? God has to build the house!

So, I want to give you seven take away statements to bring God into your home so that He can build your home on a firm foundation. Some of your hearts just sank... SEVEN?!?! I promise you will still beat the Baptist to lunch, here we go if you are taking notes today:

1. Children are a blessing, not a burden.

What do you need to know about your aim as a parent? Well, we have to begin with how we think of them. Think right, act right. And when we think of them, when we speak of them, we need to define them as a blessing, not a burden. What did Solomon say in verse 3, look again in a slightly different translation:

³ Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him.

Children are a heritage, a blessing from God, they are a gift, they are a reward. How should you feel when you get pregnant, whether you meant to or not, you should feel blessed! Happy is the man who has a quiver full of them!

Now let's get real here for a second though, it can feel like a burden. Just because it is a blessing doesn't mean it won't feel like a burden sometimes. Parenting can feel very burdensome sometimes because parenting is crazy!

It's incredible how much your life changes in an instant. You used to be able to go and do what you wanted to do, "You want to go out for dinner, sure, let's go out..." Now it's like "Who can we call to watch these tiny humans while we go out and have an hour to ourselves?" It's like planning a military invasion just to have a date, amen? I mean after you pay the babysitter you can't even afford to eat. The babysitter is eating steak; I am eating McDonalds, something about this seems off. It's amazing how your life changes once you have kids. Before kids eating out didn't include screaming or biting or throwing food (unless your marriage sucks I guess, I don't know). Now it can go real bad, real quick!

AND don't get me started on bedtime! Bedtime is nuts. You tell your kids it's time to get ready for bed, and by the way they react you would think you said I am going to chain you to a tree and leave you for dead. My kids act like they have never heard of the idea every night, "What do you mean I have to lie down, what is that?" Then you have the bath and the brushing of the teeth and the pajamas and inevitably, if I am in charge, someone ends up naked running around the house. It's not Cheryl and I... We used to be naked running around, now it's the kids that are naked. "You want to get naked?" "Ah, very tired."

Parenting is crazy. It's a wonder any of us make it out of any of this. BUT it's a blessing, not a burden. Single people are like, "This is really good birth control."

But hear me. A blessing can easily be confused with a burden because they are both heavy. And parenting is a weighty responsibility. Think about it, there is no relationship, circumstance, or environment more influential than being given the assignment of being a parent. Your child is going to grow up one day and read in this Book or hear a pastor say, "God is our Heavenly Father," "God is like a mother hen who gathers her chicks under her wing of protection" and your child is either going to get an accurate picture of God because of you. Or, with great difficulty they will get there despite of you, by God's grace. That is heavy!

And the heavier a blessing is the stronger you need to be to carry it, and the more faith is needed to see it for what it really is. The Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:

¹⁸ So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

This tells me that if you look at the job of parenting without faith, all you will see is the problems. But if you look at parenting with faith, instead of the problems, you will see the eternal potential that is possible.

All the hard parts we face now that seem like they will go on forever (the diapers, the whining, the fighting, the mess) it won't. In fact, it will be over a lot quicker than you think. Faith informs us that a day is coming when we long for someone naked running through the house drawing on walls, because we will be old and lose our minds and we will be the ones running down the halls naked, drawing on the walls. There's going to come a day they won't let you snuggle them. So don't miss the beauty of the mess because the blessing is all around you. Children are a blessing.

"Well, you don't know anything, your kid isn't a teenager, wait to they turn 16 and come talk to me." You know what, with all due respect, you don't know who you are talking about. That teenager that all you see if attitude and rebellion and back talking is a child made in the image of God that has been entrusted to your

care. And they are full of potential if you would just put on some faith and look at their life from an eternal perspective!

Here's the second thing you need to know:

2. There are lots of different arrows but only one target.

What I mean by that is the arrows in my quiver are going to be different than the arrows in your quiver. And in fact, if you have more than one child, then you know not even two of your own arrows are exactly alike. I swear Sophie & Ella have different parents.

Every arrow is different. AND I think we can all agree that is OK! Not every arrow should grow at the same pace or fit into just one system. We shouldn't try to make them more like so and so because they are a different kind of arrow. There are lots of different kinds of arrows, all fearfully and wonderfully made by God. BUT there is only one target. Lots of arrows, one target. The purpose of every arrow, regardless of what it is like, the purpose of every arrow is to hit the target.

So, if it's true that we all have different kinds of arrows, different kinds of kids, and we shouldn't pressure them to conform or fit into a mold, all different kinds of arrows, BUT only one target, then the million-dollar question is what is the target? What should we be aiming for as we approach all these different arrows?

Well, here is how Jesus defined that question, Matthew 6:33:

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

The first, the highest, and most important priority in approaching parenting is that all your different kinds of arrows would go to heaven, that they would come to know Jesus personally as their savior. There is nothing more important than that! The greatest goal of parenting is that these little arrows will know Jesus and walk with Him and follow Him and get to heaven to be with their Heavenly Father. Because if we fail at this, it doesn't matter what else we do, we fail as parents. Yes, they have a choice in this, but our aim, as we send them out into the world, should be that they hit heaven with the abundant joy of knowing Jesus while they were on this earth.

The Old Testament leader of Israel Joshua did this, he declared his aim in Joshua 24:15, he says:

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

He's saying you can live for whatever god you want to live for, sports, success, do your thing, but as for me and my house, aiming for the Lord is what matters most! You and I need to be able to say the same thing to in-laws and outlaws, to neighbors and coaches, "Hey that's great for you, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. We define success this way: seek first the kingdom of God. You can call us weird; you can call us strange, that's fine."

Listen to me, everyone has an ending to that sentence, as for me and my house... So, how would the reality of your life finish it? I know you would never say this, but what would the reality of your life tell us?

As for me and my house we will serve... sports. We will do whatever we have to do to, spend whatever we have to spend, pull our family out of church whenever we have to for soccer, for baseball, for gymnastics? As for me and my house... we will achieve all A's and get into the best college with a full scholarship. We will push as hard as we have to push, pay for whatever we have to pay for, sacrifice whatever we have to sacrifice to achieve all A's and get into the best college with a full scholarship. As for me and my house... we

will serve recreation and the good life. We will worship at the water boating, we will drain our resources for Disney, we will put lake house above God's house... How pathetic will that sound on your death bed looking back on this time you had?

Now don't misinterpret what I am saying. There is nothing wrong with sports, a good education, or having fun and enjoying life. All I am saying is every solar system only gets one sun to revolve around. Our job as parents is to never make the mistake of turning a planet into the sun. Seek first the kingdom of God and then all these other things can orbit around, if they don't interfere and cause us to get out of the orbit we are meant to be in.

CS Lewis said: **"Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither."**

Many different kinds of arrows, only one target. Next one:

3. Arrows extend your reach.

Arrows go where the archer can't or shouldn't go himself. Think about a battle. The archers aim up over a wall that would be impossible to climb to reach their enemy. Arrows allow you to extend your reach. The beauty of an arrow is it allows you to reach heights you could never get to.

I would argue that God wants us to have that kind of radical, faith-filled view as we look at this next generation. By God's grace and power our kids will go places and do things we could never do. Your greatest accomplishment in life might not be something that you do, it might be someone you raise.

Paul writes in Ephesians 2:

¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

I wonder what would happen to our children if they were raised each moment of their lives, from this moment forward, marinated in an atmosphere of faith. Where there was this expectancy that filled the home for what God was going to do through these kids. That whatever they did for work or school, that the bigger picture was, God was going to do more through their lives than they could ask or imagine. That the result of their lives would not be natural, but that it would be supernatural. What would happen if you prayed those kinds of prayers and said those kinds of things over your kids?

I am forever grateful that I grew up in a home where my parents had this faith and said these things that let me know they thought I would go places and do things they never did. Think about the kid's mom that packed the lunch that Jesus used to feed the 5,000. She didn't give Jesus anything spectacular, but she packed the lunch! Amen!

Arrows go places you can't go. You are the steward of a child of the King that God has brought into this world for such a time as this. Number 4:

4. They can't know what you don't tell them.

How could they? Our job is to teach them. Your kids can't know what you don't tell them. This was Moses' advice to the people of Israel on how to bring God into the rest of the week. He says in Deuteronomy 6:

6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

For those of you who kind of break out into a cold sweat thinking about sitting down and teaching the Bible to your kids, you should love this verse. Because this verse gives us permission to allow those conversations to flow organically while you are talking, while you are baking, while you are driving, while you are watching TV even. Let the things of God flavor your day with your kids.

Listen to me though, however your kids get their formal education, whether that is home school, private school or public school, it is our job as a parent to help shape their worldview. To help shape their value system. Our kids are growing up in the information age, but you are the only one who can teach them the things God has for you to teach them. We can't leave it up to health class, we can't leave it up to the internet, we can't leave it up to the culture to teach our kids about relationships and money and sex and you name it. That is our sacred responsibility given to us by God as parents.

When we teach and warn and inform our kids will they then make their own choices, yes. Will they rebel, it's possible. But what a tragedy to have your child come to you one day and say "Mom, Dad, if you knew, then why didn't you tell me?" Because it was uncomfortable... Really! Do we really think that's a good reason to remain silent? Even if you think you have no right to tell them what to do because you didn't do it that way, listen to me, failure and repentance are two of the biggest microphones you will ever pick up! You can teach them out of the greatest mistakes of your life.

Even when it seems like it isn't working and nothing is getting through, it is our job to keep trying. They can't know what you don't tell them. AND...

5. They can't follow what you don't show them.

I've heard it said that when children are young, they do what you tell them, when they grow up, they do as you do. They do as you show them. Our actions last longer than our words. That's why the greatest gift we can give our kids, I believe, is the gift of our presence. P R E S E N C E trumps P R E S E N T S every time.

I saw this week though that 27% of households in our country are led by a single parent. The highest percentage rate in the world! And the majority of those (80%) are single moms. It may be politically incorrect, but the statistics are tragic: 90% of the people in prison did not have a relationship with their father. 63% of youth suicides are from father-less homes. 90% of all runaways are from fatherless homes. 85% of children with behavioral disorders are from fatherless homes. 71% of teenage pregnancies are taking place in fatherless homes.

So, I want you to hear this dad's—and young men who will become dad's one day—when you stay in the home your impact is felt! Your presence makes a difference at every level. I don't share those statistics with you men to make you feel any condemnation, and I don't share them single moms to make you feel hopeless. God is a Father to the fatherless. The reason I share them is men, as you are trying to be there, maybe even trying to stick it out, but you keep showing up, the truth is even if you don't feel like it is making a difference you are! You being there matters!

Parents your kids don't need a perfect home with the perfect marriage, what your kids need is a home with you inside of it! Kids can't follow what you don't show them.

Here's the sixth:

6. Plant your feet and stand firm.

I am no expert by any stretch of the imagination, but I do know the proper stance to shoot an arrow is feet shoulder width apart, standing perpendicular to the target. How you plant your feet matters when trying to hit the target. Here's my point: If you want to know how to run your house, then you need to keep your feet planted in God's house!

I have made a ton of mistakes as a Christ-Follower, as a husband, as a dad, and as leader. I don't have a clue what I am doing many times. I don't have a bat phone in my office that reaches to God. I've made a lot of mistakes BUT I have also made some good choices that I can see how we are reaping the benefits from those now. And at the top of the list is the commitment we have made to be a part of the local church, to attend, to serve, to give, to be known by others in community. There has not been a weekend in Sophie or Ella's life where they have had to think, "I wonder if we are going to go to church today?" That's just what we do. It's just who we are whether I'm the pastor or not.

Maybe the most famous Psalm, Psalm 23 tells us after we pass through the valley of death we will dwell forever in the house of the Lord. That's the target, right? But in Psalm 27 we read that we shouldn't wait until we are dead to go to church!

AND let me tell you what we have found in our house. Because of this commitment, this stance, we have found that our anchor has held during the storms of life. Cheryl and I have made the decision to plant our family's feet, so that when the trials come we have firm footing. We have been able to scream and cry and question, but our feet were not moved because our anchor held.

So, my suggestion to you now, train for the trail that is going to inevitably come one day, raise your family in partnership with the church. Our church wants to partner with you as you send these little arrows out, not just to hit the target, but to make some noise and damage the devil's kingdom on the way there!

And that leads right into the last one, number 7:

7. Arrows are a weapon, and this is war.

Solomon chose the illustration he used for a reason. Arrows are a weapon, an offensive weapon. They go out, they get behind enemy lines and they take names.

As I look at a lot of the Christian sub-culture in our country I hear this from a lot of people. The world is just too crazy these days, it's too dangerous, too out of control. We need to shelter and protect our kids from it. I challenge you to flip that. Because this world is so messed up, I am going to send some offensive weapons out into it to make a difference!

So, what would happen if we sent our little arrows sailing out into the world toward the target, not knowing what will happen, but believing that child was going to be the head and not the tail, be from above and not below, a leader and not a follower, and that God would do exceedingly more through that child than anyone could ask, think or imagine!

I'll love this quote from F.W. Boreham, a pastor from down under in the last century, he says:

“When God sees that in this poor old world a wrong needs righting, or a truth needs preaching, or a benefit needs inventing—He sends a baby into the world to do it.” E.W. Boreham

That's why 2,000 years ago when this world was sick with sin, messed up beyond repair, God's solution was to send a baby, His only Son Jesus, as an arrow toward the target to die on the cross for our sins and then

rise from the dead so that if anyone would put their faith and trust in Him they would not perish but have eternal life!

I dare you to be the leader of the kind of home that would look at this dark world and say, "I believe God is calling us to send forth children to do great things for His great name!" If you believe that today put your hands together and shout amen!

So, let's end where we began today. This is the Good News! God knows you need His help. God knows you need His help when it comes to building your home. What did Psalm 127 say?

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. ² It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved [What's the word? Say it again!] sleep.

But here's the question. If you're sleeping, who's watching over the city? If you're sleeping, who's growing the crops? The answer, God is! Here's the principle that is being taught, watch this, if you do your job, you're faithful with the things God has called you to do during the rest of the week, then at the end of the day you put your head on your pillow knowing that God is the One who watches the city! God is the one who grows the crops! God is the one building the house! He never puts that burden on you! That principle applies to a lot of different areas of life, but I love the fact that God brings it up in the context of parenting.

The verse says God gives His beloved sleep. Sleeplessness is the sign of being a new parent. But there's the kind of sleeplessness that comes from a late-night feeding and then there's the sleeplessness that comes from carrying the strain of the family. Tired and weary parents hear me. God ultimately is the one who is responsible for the family. And God says, I never counted on you to get everything right. I just want you to do your job and trust that I care more about your kids turning out the way that they're supposed to be than you do!

What an awesome thought. I feel overwhelmed by my inabilities as a parent, and probably you do too. I know moms who feel completely overwhelmed with this. You feel like you're doing such a bad job. But God knew you were a screwed-up sinner before He blessed you with kids, that's not a surprise to Him! He says, do your job, do your best to bring Me into the REST of the week, and then trust at the end of the day, you put your head on your pillow, and know that I'm the One who watches the city! I'm the one who grows the crops and builds the house!

Let me pray for us.