

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday July 8, 2018 "Relationship Series: This is Us: you need to know".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message on Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still go thru it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Sunday's Message.

Sunday was the second part in our series "***This is Us***", our look into what it means to be family. Both our nuclear family and a family as a church...or body of people seeking God together. Last week Lamar did an overview of what family is, and the connections we can enjoy within those relationships. This past Sunday, Lamar hit the difficult topic of dealing with those deep flaws we find in each other, those secrets that slowly erode intimacy and trust, and how we still stay family and deal with those issues honestly.

We will combine the usual thought provoking opening questions with ones about the passage to give you a better foundation for the theme of this message.

The passage used was the story of Noah, which we're all familiar with, but in this message the events after the flood. This story deals with a particular situation in which a secret struggle of Noah was uncovered, (literally), and how different members chose to deal with that struggle.

The passage used was **Genesis 9:20-23**. Go ahead and read this.

In this story we see Noah had gotten drunk, passed out, and one of the sons had just gone in, seen his dad, and walked out to tell others. However, two of Noah's other sons, Shem and Japheth, walked in backwards and covered their father so as not to embarrass or dishonor him. Such a compassionate thing to do.

We know Noah as a mighty man of God. The only righteous person that God had found on the earth before he sent the flood. And here he was naked, drunk, passed out. Not what you would imagine from someone God so highly favored.

Which causes us to dig in and deal with some of the specifics of this account.

Being family means dealing with the good and the bad. The great stories found in our family, and the really tough ones. Noah's three sons had to have known that Noah had a drinking problem, and yet for some reason we don't have a record of any tough conversations to try to deal with it.

Take time to give this some thought, but are there any issues, secrets, struggles in your family, even if only you or a couple of others may know about, that every pretends aren't there? What does this do to the dynamics of the family, how everyone relates to each other?

**Are there people in your family who don't actually see what's going on?
Have family members mentioned things they've noticed to you, and you don't believe them?
Have you tried to deal with any ongoing struggles? What happened when you did try to do something?**

Pastor Lamar said secrets, unaddressed issues, cause some very specific problems within a family.

1. Secrets function to divide families and place permanent barriers between them.
2. Secrets create unnecessary estrangements and false companionship. (People who share secrets tend to have this bond that excludes other family members who don't know them).
3. Secrets distort perceptions.
4. Secrets exacerbate anxiety in areas unrelated to the actual secret.

We also learned that once these struggles are aired, brought out in the open, our most common response is **disappointment** which is more difficult than disagreement. Disagreement is easy, because we're right and everyone who doesn't see things like we do is wrong. But disappointment creates **distance** from the other and we tend to **dehumanize** or demonize those who are struggling rather than showing compassion or grace.

This is what Ham did when he saw his father. He refused to see his father as just human, and even more so Ham missed his own brokenness and flaws. This is what judgment often does.

We MUST choose, decide, in these situations to **honor and restore the dignity** of the other person when we discover their flaws.

We MUST focus on the **doing the right thing**, what is the honorable and most dignifying response, rather than condemn or judge.

We MUST choose to focus on doing what we can to **reconcile the relationships** not try to decide who is right and who is wrong.

Covering the other person means we **confront with compassion**, we sit down with the other person and talk about how we can work together to walk with them thru those struggles.

So....some final thoughts.

Where in your family are there strained or even broken relationships?

Where in your family are there issues that need to be dealt with that everyone is ignoring or just pretending don't exist?

How could you lovingly step into those situations, begin to have those difficult conversations, that could help address those issues, and restore the dignity of family members?

This is such a pivotal issue in the overall health of many of our families, and we get to be the one that **brings honest loving truth, compassion, redemption and dignity** back to struggling family members. And one day when we're struggling maybe those kind words will lift us up too.