

Think Smaller – Focus on the Family

8.14.22

Various Text

Sunday AM

There's nothing quite like family life. This summer, while we had all the kids at home, Meg and I found ourselves humored and mortified by the many stories our kids shared tattling on each other's exploits when they were younger. It was scary. Recently, I came across a story in *Reader's Digest*, where one child pulled a prank on their sibling that I found humorous – and thought... that could've happened at my house.

A big sis went to her little sis and said, “Kerry, you're (7), so it's time you knew our family secret.” Of course, Kerry idolized her older sister and took whatever she said as gospel. “Mom isn't really our mom. Our real mother was eaten by a lion while she and Dad were on safari. The lady in the other room came from an agency as our replacement mom. The good news is you don't have to listen to her.” Kerry was stunned, and asked, “Does Dad know?” “Yes, just ask him.” Well, the rest of the day, Kerry ignored fake Mom's requests, and when Dad got home, she begged him to tell her the truth. Well, dad, being a dad, sighed, “Yes. It's true. But she's been great – and you even look like her.” Finally, fake Mom clued in and shared a photo of herself holding Kerry as a newborn, and added, “This real mom will deal w/ your sister and your dad later.”

In case you weren't here last Sunday, we started a new series in conjunction w/ our 6-yr *Aim Higher, Dream Bigger* strategic plan entitled – **Think Smaller**.

To think smaller is the 2nd of (6) initiatives we want to engage to be the church God's called us to be.

- **Shine Brighter**
- **Think Smaller**
- **Live Bolder**
- **Build Stronger**
- **Share Wider**
- **Go Farther**

To *Think Smaller* is to live **intentionally relational** in our relationships w/ God, our families, our church, and our world. It's an invitation to zoom in, lean into, and dig deeper into the people our lives intersect w/ daily.

Last week, we talked about how to live *intentionally relational* w/ God and how it's the springboard to all other relationships. Today we're going to talk about how to live *intentionally relational* in our homes.

Let me begin w/ a question – **How do you spell love?** If you said L.O.V.E., then you've already missed the point – for LOVE is spelled T.I.M.E.

Time is a gift and resource that's nonrenewable and nontransferable. You can't store it up, slow it down, hold it up, divide it out, or give it away. You can't hoard it or save it up for a rainy day – for when it's lost, it's gone forever and can never be resurrected – which is what makes time so valuable.

This is why the Psalmist wrote – *Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.* Psalm 90:12

This is why LOVE is spelled T.I.M.E. b/c time is arguably the most essential commodity in life – and b/c it's so precious, it should only be given to who or what is most important – to what we love.

So today, I'd like to talk w/ you about how to love your spouse and kids by using the acrostic T.I.M.E.

I TRUST in the Lord

When it comes to relationships, it begins w/ our walk w/ God – not just that we know Him, but that we're walking daily w/ Him. **How we relate w/ God directly influences every other relationship in our life.**

This was underscored in the words of Jesus *to love God w/ all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength – and then to love your neighbor as you want to be loved.*

This idea takes us back to the 10 Commandments and how they were laid out. The 1st (4) deal w/ our intimacy w/ God, while the 2nd (6) deal w/ our intimacy w/ people. **Meaning** – if we don't get the **vertical** right by following the 1st (4) commands to love God w/ all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, then we won't get the 2nd (6) correct to love others (or horizontal relationships) the way we want to be loved.

This is no truer than in our homes. When mom/dad walk w/ God, it impacts their marriage, parenting, as well as, every other dimension of family life.

This is at the heart of Paul's teachings on the family in Ephesians 5-6 and Colossians 3. His point is simple – ***every detail w/in the home begins w/ walking w/ God.***

In Ephesians 5, he wrote – *husbands love your wives as Christ loves His church, and wives align under your husbands as you align under Jesus* (6) *Children honor your parents, and parents don't exasperate your kids.*

What you may not know is that these (2) commands are IMPOSSIBLE commands – unless one is living intimately w/ God under the influence of the H.S.

SEE – No husband can love as God (*agape*) loves unless he's walking w/ God. Instead, he defaults to loving his wife thru his human capacity as it wages war w/ his natural inclination to only love himself. But to live submitted to God under the H.S., enables him to love his wife (and kids) as God loves him.

It's no different for the wife. DYK – the instruction to wives finds its way all the way back to **Genesis 3** and God's curse on Eve as a result of her disobedience.

*The Lord said to Eve, "I will increase your pain in childbirth, and you will **desire** your husband's authority, but he will rule over you."* Genesis 3:16

SEE – Before the fall, Eve lived under the authority and responsibility of Adam, but after the fall she was cursed w/ a desire for Adam's position under God.

desire (*t'shuqa*) to seek control over or to compel.

The curse on Eve was that a woman's desire from this time forth would be to usurp the place of man's headship and that he would resist her desire and would try to keep her in her place under his rule.

POINT – the only way a husband will *agape* his wife (and kids) the way God *agapes* them, and the only way that a wife will honor her husband (and kids) the way God wants her to is if they both know Christ as Savior and choose to abide under the influence of the H.S. Otherwise, they're just operating from their flesh.

Meaning – the key to having a home that works is having a husband/wife who make TIME to trust God.

II INVEST in the Essentials

What are the essentials in life? You might say, food, water, shelter, and relationships – and while I agree, In Proverbs 3:1-12, we find (6) spiritual essentials.

Here in this text (which I will delve into much deeper in 2023), we find Solomon’s instructions to his kids.

Note that each lesson is coupled w/ a promise/blessing.

A Make God’s WORD Your Priority

¹ *My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.*

B TREAT Others as You Want to be Treated

³ *Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.*

C GIVE God His Rightful Place in Your Life

⁵ *Trust in the Lord w/ all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

D Live HUMBLY Understanding Your Limits

⁷ *Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.*

E Faithfully STEWARD God’s Blessings

⁹ *Honor the Lord w/ your wealth, w/ the first fruits of your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim w/ new wine.*

F EMBRACE Discipline as a Gift from God

¹¹ *My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, b/c the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.*

III MANAGE Realistic Expectations

Dr. Howard Hendricks, a distinguished seminary prof at DTS, was once asked about how he and his wife had been so successful in their marriage – and he replied. “It’s simple, we **expect** only (2) things from each other. We expect each other to have an unwavering commitment to Christ. And (2), we each expect the other to have an unwavering commitment to us.”

Truth is, every relationship has expectations. How we manage those expectations will largely determine the quality/character of the relationship – which, in turn, often dictates the direction/quality of our lives.

In, *Little House on the Freeway*, Tim Kimmel offers (4) traits to a home w/ peace – and 1st on the list is to **discipline your expectations**. To have **reasonable**, **relational**, and **realistic** expectations of each other.

But this is no easy task. Like the pastor (true story) who sent out a list of 112 verbs to his church asking them to circle the verbs they felt were most important for a leader to be doing. To his chagrin, he received 332 verbs about their expectations.

SEE – the simple reality is while we can have ambition for ourselves/others, we have to learn how to manage these expectations so they move us forward rather than disrupt and hold us back. So, let me offer 3 keys...

A Be Sure to **EXPRESS** Your Expectations

This is an absolute must. There's nothing worse than being held to unknown expectations. Let others know what you expect of yourself and of them. Next...

B Be **REALISTIC** w/ Your Expectations

In the cartoon, *Pardon My Planet*, a young man is talking w/ his fiancée and says, "From the day you marry me I'll spend the rest of my life making your dreams come true. 'Till then though, I'll work myself to the bone trying to lower your expectations."

Of course, the goal isn't to lower expectations but to set expectations that are realistic and achievable – recognizing that – WE ALL HAVE LIMITATIONS.

C Be **NEGOTIABLE** w/ Your Expectations

Recognizing we all have limitations, when we come together to negotiate, we have the ability to turn unrealistic expectations into realistic expectations.

YET – there's one thing we can never negotiate – Biblical absolutes. Curfew, yes! Honesty/respect, no.

IV Put Forth the **EFFORT**

I've shared w/ you before that as a boy, my grandad used to say to me – ***you only get out of life what you're willing to put into it.*** Meaning – (1) we each must take responsibility for our own actions/words; (2) we each must take responsibility for our circumstances no matter how we find ourselves in them; (3) we each must put in the necessary effort/work to succeed – b/c little in life happens by chance.

I think this is especially true w/in the family. Whether as spouses, parents, or siblings – family requires hard work and tireless effort – and a ton of patience. I think this is what Paul had in mind in Colossians 3:18-23.

Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh w/ them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged... and whatever you do, work at it w/ all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters... Colossians 3:18-23

All this to say – to love our families and to love them well requires time. It requires time w/ God. It requires time to invest in the essentials. It requires time managing expectations, and it requires time putting in the needed effort to enjoy life together.

DYK – there are **168 hrs** in a week? Avg. person:

- Sleeps – **56 hrs**
- Meals and Personal Hygiene – **24 hrs**
- Work and Travel – **50 hrs**
- Leaving **35 hrs** (5 hrs a day) for other things

It's what we do w/ this time that makes all the difference in the world to the success of our families.

Recently, a friend called as he was dropping off his son at an event – and he was upset. He and his son were at odds – as life would have it – dad was at the end of his rope. See, mom and dad work 50-70 hours a week to make ends meet, have (3) kids all involved in school, w/ at least (1) extra-curricular activity per child – meaning they have “0” time for family. So, I offered him a few ideas to reign in life and to bring value (time) back to his family – I now offer to you:

- 1 – Weekly make time for God w/ the family
- 2 – Daily unplug from technology to talk about the day
- 3 – Plan at least (1) meal around the table every week
- 4 – Plan time together having fun at least once a month

All this to say, if we want our family to work, then we must become intentionally relational.

Invitation