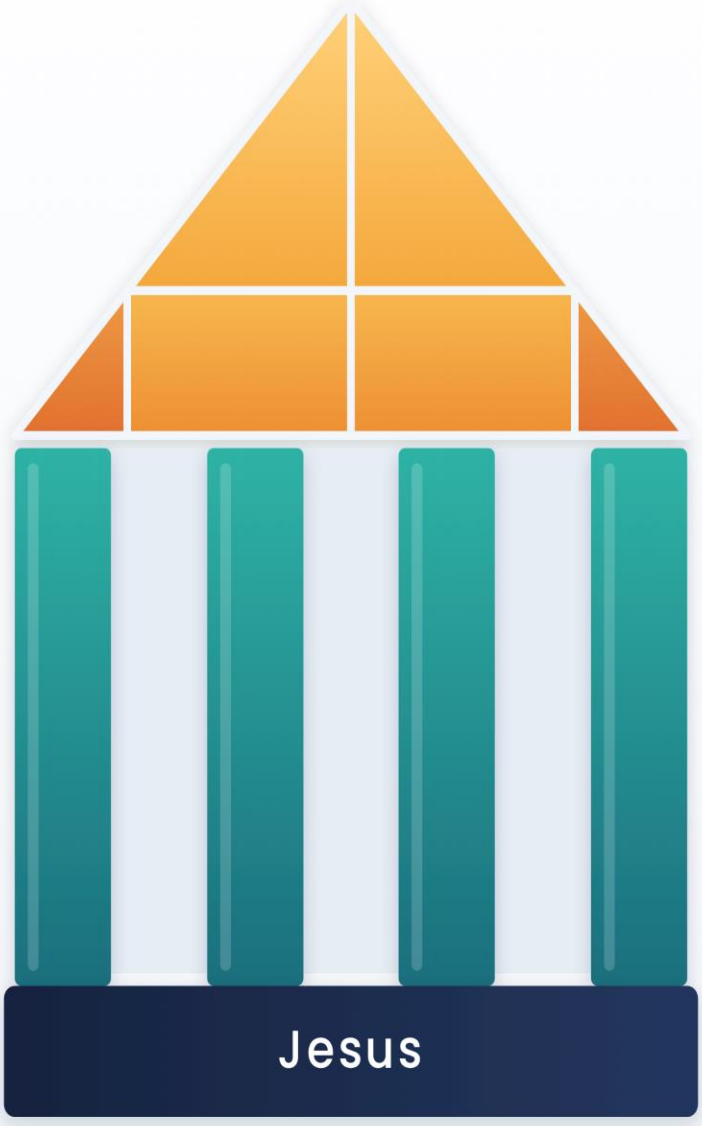
Building Strong Families



Unless The Lord Builds The House They Labor In Vain That Build It. Psalm 127:1

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A) Jesus Is the Foundation Col. 1:16–18

> **Q. "What was I created for?" A. Jesus**

G.L.O.W. — We must build on the foundation of Jesus' calling for our lives!

G — GLORY

*We are **created** to live for His glory.*

- **1 Cor. 10:31** *"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*
- **John 15:8** Bearing fruit through abiding in Jesus brings the Father glory. Our lives are not about making our name known but making Jesus known.

L — LOVE

*We are **created** to love God and others.*

- **Matt. 22:37** "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind (strength)…*" (**Deut. 6:5**)
- **1 John 4:19** "*We love Him because He first loved us.*"
- Prayer, worship, and obedience begin with receiving the Father's love.
- **Eph. 3:17–18** • **John 13:35**

O — ONE THING

*We were **created** to pursue one thing — **Jesus**.*

- **Ps. 27:4** *"One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple."*
- A focused heart. David's passion was not many things, but one thing: God Himself.
- **Luke 10:38–42** (i.e., Mary and Martha)

W — WORSHIP

*We are **created** to worship God.*

- **Rev. 4:11** *"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."*
- **Isa. 43:7** *"…whom I have created for My glory."*
- Worship is not just music; it is the purpose for which we were created.

B) Creating a Legacy of a Godly Family

- **God's plan of oneness** — **Gen. 2:24** Be united and become one flesh.
- **Foundation** — **1 Cor. 3:11** Jesus Christ; **Matt. 7:24**: obeying God's Word.
- **Four Pillars** — Love • Trust • Respect • Understanding
- **Six Blocks** — Commitment • Time • Communication • Appreciation • Conflict Resolution • Spiritual Commitment
- **Ps. 127:1** *"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it…"*
- A great need in our society is **wholeness** in the family. Fragmentation is the enemy's weapon, as is mobility. **Luke 11:17** "…a divided house." Nothing is more painful than division, strife, and discord in the home.
- **Ps. 133** Blessing at the place of unity — the home and the church family. **John 17:22–23** complete unity; **Eph. 4:1–4** *"…the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*
- **Prov. 15:17** *"Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred."* Maintain unity.
- **Prov. 17:1** *"Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife."*

C) Building Strong Families — Four Pillars

Four elements necessary in every relationship.

1. Love (Agape) — the most enduring

- Love of God: not based on response, emotions, feelings, or performance.
- Not how we should love, but how **God** loves. **1 Cor. 13**
- The best way to destroy a marriage: win every argument — shifting the focus from being loving to being right!
- **1 John 3:16** This is how we know what love is: Jesus laid down His life.
- **1 John 4:10** This is love — not that we loved God, but that He loved us. (This is the standard.)
- **1 John 4:19** We love Him because He first loved us. Love is measured not by our love for God, but by His love for us.
- **Rom. 5:5** God's love has been poured into our hearts. There are no limits on human love when His Spirit lives within us.
- **Col. 3:14** Put on love, which binds us together in perfect unity.

2. Trust — the most fragile

Trust is an integrity issue. Trust and forgiveness are different issues.

- Wounded and betrayed people don't easily trust again; they build walls that both protect and imprison.
- Children of divorce often don't begin dealing with the pain until their 20s.
- Once trust is broken, it is not easily restored. There is an epidemic of cynicism and mistrust in the world today. **Matt. 10:21, 36**

a) Trust is having confidence in the other person

- Confidence in their character, motivation, and word. **Prov. 31:10–12** *"The heart of her husband safely trusts her… She does him good and not evil all the days of her life."*
- Untrustworthy people use half-truths, evasiveness, lies, and manipulation.

b) Emphasize the things that build trust

- Trust creates the climate for intimacy. Some try to control people through fear, suspicion, and isolation, but intimacy is built only through trust. Trust can only be earned. (Illustration: Charlie Brown)
- **Faithfulness** — **1 Cor. 4:2** *"It is required in stewards that one be found faithful."* Unfaithfulness is giving to others what rightfully belongs to your partner: time, secrets, your heart.
- **Reliability** — **James 5:12** Let your yes be yes.
- **Honesty** — Trust thrives on truth, including honesty about struggles and failures.

c) Trust takes time to establish

- You can't trust someone you don't know. Observe how they respond across a variety of small issues.

3. Respect or Honor — the most neglected

- Some cultures disrespect women, children, and those with disabilities, and place greater value on other people.
- **Honor** is acknowledging others' worth and value: treating them with respect and valuing their feelings and opinions.
- **Rom. 12:10** *"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another."*

Four types of honor

- **Intrinsic** — Honor that belongs to a person because they are made in God's image. **John 4:7–9** Jesus with the woman at the well; Jesus saying, "Let the children come to Me."
  - Honor: to show high regard; to treat with courtesy. Respect: appreciation of worth; to express consideration.
  - See others as a gift from God, like a Van Gogh painting — protected. (Illustration: a new car, computer, furniture, carpet)
- **Character** — **Prov. 22:1** *"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold."*
  - Elevate character — not beauty, athleticism, or intelligence. The family is the place to promote and honor character.
- **Achievement** — Honor talents, gifts, skills, service, and school awards.
  - But not all achievement is good (e.g., a pro athlete who is abusive, arrogant, or lustful; a businessman who lies and cheats to gain wealth with no conscience).
- **Position** — Parents, leaders, and elders. **1 Tim. 5:17**

4. Understanding — the one that takes the most time

- **Prov. 27:23** *"Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds."*

a) Listening to one another

- **James 1:19** Slow to speak, quick to hear. **Prov. 18:13** *"He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him."*
- Seek to understand first. Listen with the heart, and listen to the heart!

b) Openness

- We can't know someone unless they open up to us, and we can't properly serve someone unless we know them. (Illustration: help that isn't really help)
- **Golden Rule** — **Matt. 7:12** *"Do to others what you would have them do to you."*

c) Communication

- Communication is essential to understanding. **1 Pet. 3:7** *"Husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife… as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."*
- The goal of communication is not mutual agreement but **mutual understanding**.
- **The five love languages:** Words of Affirmation • Gifts • Physical Affection • Quality Time • Acts of Service

D) Building Strong Families — Six Building Blocks

The secrets of a strong family.

1. Strong families are committed to the family

- To serve, love, sacrifice, and promote others' happiness. This is the keystone: **covenant love**.
- What are we really committed to — fame, fortune, power, pleasure, personal fulfillment? **Mal. 4:5–6**
- Marriage covenant: "For better or for worse…"
- Keep first things first. **Phil. 2:3–8** (contrast vv. 20–21, seeking one's own interest)
- "What's in it for me?" Family commitments confront our selfishness.

2. Strong families spend time together

- Make this a priority. Some say, "I don't have time!" — make time! If someone told you, "I'm giving you $500,000 tomorrow at 3:00 p.m.," you would find the time.
- Create family memories: trips, visits to grandparents, working together, playing, celebrations, camping.
- Family times: planning, teaching, fun, devotions, problem-solving, date nights, and one-on-one times (breakfast, eating out, basketball, walks).
- Jesus gave Himself (**Eph. 5:25**) — give yourself. The most important thing you can give your family is yourself (**1 Thess. 2:8**), not just money, education, or advice, but **time**.
- **1 Cor. 4:15** "…ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers." (Illustration: my dad coming to my games)
- Average American fathers: about six minutes a week of meaningful interaction with teens, and 30 seconds a day with preschoolers.
- Quality time vs. quantity time — we need both quality **and** large quantities. There is great importance in first just being there. **Deut. 6:4–6** Imparting a way of life.

- **Make these commitments:** (1) regular time with family, (2) date night with your spouse, (3) one-on-one bonding times.

3. Strong families have positive communication

- This is the greatest area of concern for couples. Strong families do not automatically have a good communication system; they want it, work at it, re-evaluate it, and **consistently** maintain it.
- **Six levels of communication:** (1) greeting, (2) things, (3) others, (4) yourself, (5) your relationship, (6) spiritual. (Illustration: Tracey and I praying together)
- **The goal:** mutual understanding, not always agreement.
- Learn to speak for yourself — what you observe, think, feel, want, and do. Skills can be learned; attitudes can be changed. About 60% of divorces occur over these issues.
- Some couples get stuck, and structure can help: no disrespectful speech, interruptions, put-downs, cut-offs, or silent treatments.
- **Prov. 18:13** Answering before listening; **James 1:19** slow to speak, quick to hear.
- **The number one destroyer of a family: a closed spirit.** **Eph. 4:1–3** Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

4. Strong families express appreciation to others

- We often make the mistake of only thinking it and not saying it. Research suggests this area alone can shift confidence and security like no other.
- **Matt. 3:17** *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*
- (Illustration: all A's and one B — what are you focused on?) Focus on the positives in your spouse and children, and you will have a better spouse and children!
- Make sincere compliments; it is like writing on their hearts. (Illustration: diamonds, not the dirt)
- William James: *"The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated."*
- **Prov. 31:10** *"Her worth is far above rubies."* **v. 30** *"…a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised."*
- **Practice:** write down the good things you see, then say them.

5. Strong families solve problems in a crisis

- Conflict resolution: bond through crisis times — counsel together and pull together, not apart.
- Many families hold unrealistic expectations (job, spouse, sickness, lifestyle). Good families are not conflict-free, but they seek grace to resolve conflict.
- **Two keys to conflict resolution: humility and forgiveness.** **Matt. 5:21–26** • **Matt. 18**
- **Eph. 4:26** Do not let the sun go down on your anger.
- Avoid late nights with your spouse or children when you are tired, and avoid global statements ("you always," "you never").

6. Strong families have a spiritual commitment

> **"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." — Joshua 24:15**

- **This is the most important block.** **1 Cor. 3:11** There is no other foundation than Jesus! **Col. 1:17** *"…in Him all things hold together."*

- When we turn to the Lord in every situation, He will sustain us. **Ps. 55:22**
- Reconciliation in the cross — grace and power to love, yield, and be humble. **Eph. 2:14–18**
- **Cultivate a spiritual atmosphere in your home.** **Ps. 145:4** *"One generation shall praise Your works to another."*
- Praying together as a couple and as a family builds spiritual connection.
- The best thing you can do for your family is to submit yourself to the Lordship of Jesus.
- Create a sense of purpose and destiny: give guidelines for living, walk in the power of God, and live for something outside ourselves. (Illustration: create a **family testimony**)