

**A Different Perspective
Building a Godly Family (1)
09-26-3
The Ideal Family**

I'm excited because this week we're kicking off a few weeks looking at what it means to build a Godly family. That's why I'm so excited. Because I've been praying, praying that of the millions of people that will listen to these programs this week, God will transform countless families. Think about it. The family is God's smallest, fighting formation. In the battle of life, He uses the family to protect and to nurture, to teach and to mature one another.

Over the last couple of days we've been chatting about the realities of family life. Today, so often, we can be so dysfunctional in our family relationships. But that's nothing new. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. They had exactly the same problem. It's what happens when we turn our backs on God. Husband blames wife, brother turns on brother.

Look back over the history of our families, past and present and we can probably point to quite a number of dysfunctions. The rifts. The strife. The relationship breakdowns. The tensions. But truly I believe that when we get back into a relationship with the Lord our God one of the things that He wants to do is to restore those family relationships. To make our families the blessing He always intended them to be.

The problem I have is convincing people that this is, in fact, the case. 'Look at the mess I'm in' is so often the attitude I encounter. 'God couldn't possibly, possibly set things right in my family.' Well, maybe some of the things we're reaping, from the mistakes in the past, are here to stay. Divorce is divorce - that's it.

But I'm an optimist and I'll tell you why. Because God is all about hope and that hope is meant to shine a light in every nook and cranny. Every dark crevasse. Every hurt and loss and pain that we try not to think about. God's light of hope shines there.

Have a listen to what Paul writes in Romans chapter 5.

"Since we are justified by our faith, we have peace with God through Jesus. Through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we now stand and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God."

"Not only that but we also boast in our suffering because we know that suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character. Character produces hope and that hope doesn't disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through His Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

"For a while we were still weak but at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

(It's the Book of Romans, chapter 5, verses 1 to 8).

There are a few things in that. Let me just pull three of them out. The first thing is he talks about the fact that, when we believe in Jesus, we have peace with God through Jesus. And that's why we can stand in the grace in which we now stand. That's the effect of putting our faith in Jesus. **Peace and God's grace.**

But then he goes on and says, 'well, it's great, we've got peace and grace but you know something, **we're also going to suffer.** And that's okay because suffering gives us endurance. Endurance builds our characters. And once our character's been built, we can look beyond all suffering and all whinging and complaining and we can see that **God has given us hope.** Hope because He's written His love on our hearts by His very Spirit.'

And all of that, all of that is based on sacrifice. God proves His love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Jesus died for us.

How often do we want to grumble about family? 'Agh, they're so difficult, it's also tense. Grumble, grumble, grumble, grumble, suffering.' Paul says, 'no, no, no. Boast in your suffering. Because something good is going on here. Because through it, God is refining us and building us and leading us into a place of real hope.'

Let me tell you something. God loves to refine us through suffering. He deals with some of the worst things in us through suffering. Selfishness. Deceit. Pride. But only when we co-operate with Him. That's why Paul says that he boasts instead of he grumbles. Because God's up to something good.

God put us in family for reasons and look at the end of this passage. It's all based on sacrifice. We're going to talk a lot more on this 'sacrifice' thing over coming weeks in family, because it's important. But right now, I just want to paint a picture in our hearts.

If you were going to build a Godly family. Get over all this suffering. All this pain. All this whinging. Let's just get our eyes focused on the end game. If you were going to build a Godly family, I mean a family that, I don't know, is a blessing. A family that sticks together. A family that learns. A family that knows how to give and to take and to bless. What would it look like? I don't know. It's hard sometimes because we look at our families and think, 'augh, it could never happen.' I'm going to tell you. God wants us to build a Godly family.

Well here's my picture of what a Godly family looks like for me. I'm going to ask you to invest some time over this next day or so to figure out what does a Godly family look like for you? **The first thing** in my Godly family is that each person, in that family, is living out a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. Growing in their knowledge and their love for Jesus. That's the first and foremost thing. If you want a Godly family the people have to be Godly and the first and greatest commandment is to

"Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength."

So if you want a Godly family, people have to be close to Jesus.

The second thing is that each person, in my Godly family, is actually living out that relationship. Okay, we're all different but each one is living out the love that they have for Jesus in how they treat others. It's the second commandment. It's similar to the first.

"Love your neighbour as yourself."

The third thing is very family specific. That mum and dad, husband and wife have a close and intimate relationship. A strong, loving, leadership team. The wife honours her husband. The husband cherishes his wife.

The fourth thing is that the parents are honoured. Have you noticed, in the Ten Commandments, the first four commandments are about us and God? The very next commandment, the fifth commandment is,

"Honour your father and your mother so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord, your God, has given to you."
(Exodus chapter 20, verse 12)

Now, if I had been God, my hunch is I wouldn't have even put in a commandment about loving your parents. God does. And it's important that children learn to love and to honour their parents. So that's the fourth thing in my Godly family. This family is one where the children know what it is to honour their parents.

The fifth thing is that each person develops an understanding of the differences between one another. The different roles. The different personality types. And learns to cherish those differences.

And finally, **the sixth thing** is that this Godly family is a family from which blessing flows outwards. Whether it's hospitality or providing a safe port in a storm for one of our teenage daughters friends going through a tough time. Whatever it is, that blessing flows out through the family.

That's what a Godly family looks like for me. And I guess, in a sense, those are things we're going to be looking at over the next few weeks. Here's my question though - if you were to build a Godly family, what would it look like for you? Because unless we know what we're shooting for how do we know which direction to set off in? How do we know when we've arrived?