

## Home Improvement Series: Building Healthy Relationships

### Part Three: “What’s a Family For?”

Pastor Dale Campfield - July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010

#### Intro:

**Matt 28:19** “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

#### **ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve**

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Here we are, week three of our Home Improvement Series. The goal for this series is to Build Healthy Relationships. Our two theme texts are...

#### **Philippians 2:2**

*"Live together in harmony and love, as though you only had one mind and spirit between you."*

God's ideal for your relationships, whether you're married or not (even if you're not married you're going to get a lot out of this series because it's about relationships) is harmony, intimacy (love) and unity (one mind). The reality is that a lot of our relationships are disharmony, conflict and disappointment.

#### **Ephesians 4:3**

*"Make every to keep the unity of the Spirit."*

I would encourage you to be following along with us in our WARRANTY booklets. The WARRANTY is filled with four scriptures from God’s Word each week for you to memorize.

The three texts this week are:

#### **Proverbs 13:10**

*Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.*

#### **Ecclesiastics 4:9-10**

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!*

#### **Ecclesiastics 4:12**

*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

#### **BONUS VERSE**

##### **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**

*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Today, we're going to talk about the most important relationships that you have.... The relationships in your family. I'm thankful to have come from a family of Christians and have a wonderful heritage. But that's not the same for most people. For some of you, your family members are believers, some are not. Whether they are or not, the fact is we need to have the relationships in our family as healthy as possible. The family is a launching pad into life. The family has been created by God. God believes in the family and desires for your family to be healthy.

Some family members are made up of a dad, mom and kids. Some are families with single parents. Some are family with no parents. Some have no kids. The family is made up of all different types of members. For some of you, your friends are your family. For those of you that are single, your neighbors can be your family. We all have some type of family in our lives.

I love this definition of the family... *People whose connection is stronger than friendship.*

The family has been taking a lot of heat lately. There are people who say the family is obsolete, that it's out of date, that it's irrelevant, that we should forget even the idea of the family, it's no use any more.

But the family is not finished, it's just fragmented and it's fragile. It needs to be strengthened. So today we're going to look at "What's a Family For?" What's the big deal? Why are Mom's important? Why are Dad's important? Why are kids important? Why is the family important?

To get the answer to that question you have to go way back to the owner's manual -- the start of the owner's manual.

Genesis 2:18

*"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone.'"*

He continues to say in verse 24; *I will make him a helper suitable for him. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife."*

Notice what this says. The family was God's idea. He thought it up. God thought up the family so it's not finished. It's just fragile.

When God made Adam He put him in a perfect environment. Adam had this perfect environment. No problems. No stress. No difficulties. So God made him this wife. And God said, *"It's not good for man to be alone."* So he made him a helper, a lover, a wife.

I don't care if you're married or not, the Bible says it's not good for you to be alone. You were made for relationships. Human beings were made for relationships. Whether you're married or not, you need companionship. You need friendships. You need people to relate to. That's why the worst kind of punishment is called solitary confinement.

This morning I thought we'd look at four purposes God intends for your family.

## WHAT'S A FAMILY FOR?

### #1 – The Family is a Shelter from Storms

A lot of people think the family is just a bed and breakfast place. A tax deduction. But the Bible says far more than that. First it's a shelter from storm. We all have tough days. We all get rained on. We all get dumped on. We all go through bad weather. There are days when things don't work out right. And we all need a place of protection, a place of peace, a refuge where we can just let down from the storms of life and find protection.

No matter what your family looks like, is it a safe place for your family members? Is it a place to help shelter each other from the storms of life?

#### **Proverbs 14:26**

*"Reverence for the Lord gives a man deep strength. His children have a place of refuge and security."*

Circle those two things. The family is meant to be a place of refuge and security.

#### **Ecclesiastes 4:12**

*"One standing alone can be attacked and defeated. But two can stand back to back and conquer"*

We need shelters from storms and two can handle what one cannot handle.

**Illus:** Games and the Goal to get HOME.

The goal of most games is to get home. When you're home you're safe.

There are many kinds of storms. Emotional, physical, relational, financial. Three storms that rock your life that you need a family to help make it through:

### **1) Change**

We live in an era of rapid change. Think over the years how much the area of the eastside of Cincinnati has changed; all of the new restaurants and housing developments. Some of you have been around a long time and seen a lot of change. There's even change in our moving to this new facility here at RECEPTIONS.

Any change for good or for bad, positive or negative, causes stress. They even have a home stress scale that says the more change you have in your life, the more stressed out you get. We need a place of stability, a base, some place that's predictable, that you can count on. Alvin Toffler calls them "Islands of security in an age of Future Shock". So we need places of stability when storms of change come.

When the world around you is changing, it's nice to have a home of stability.

## 2) Failure

Nobody wins all the time. We all make mistakes. We all stumble. Sometime you fail the test. Sometimes you get fired. Sometimes you get passed over for the promotion. Sometimes you go bankrupt. Nobody wins all the time in life. Failure is a whole lot easier to handle when you come home to hugs and there's somebody there to put their arms around you and say, "We're going to make it!"

## 3) Rejection

Probably the most difficult of all is rejection. The storm of rejection. That's the toughest one to handle. It hurts to be criticized. It hurts to be attacked. Some of the most damaging attacks you had occurred when you were a child and you can even still remember them today. Just the thought of that childhood, brings back the fears, the guilt, the shame, the hurt, the sense of feeling rejected. Would you agree that kids can be ruthless with other kids? If you don't believe in the sin nature, become a grade school teacher. Kids say the most awful of things to each other. Little kids don't have the sense to know what to accept and what to reject. If they don't have any positive reinforcement at home, they're going to tend to believe what all those kids say about them. It isn't true, but they're going to accept and they're going to go through life with emotional wounds. When you become a teenager you go through that difficult stage of acceptance and rejection. Remember the heartbreak of breaking up?

Intentionally or unintentionally we get our hearts broken in life. The fact is life is tough and rejection's hard.

### How to turn a home into a shelter...

- First you **HEAR**.  
You need a listening ear if you're going to build a shelter from storms. You've got to listen when your family hurts and not turn a deaf ear. Listen through the ears. Hear.
- Then you've got to **HUG**.  
You need to give physical affection in your family. Lots of it. Pats on the back. Hugs, embraces, kisses. Physically show your affection for your family.
- **HELP**.  
You need to give people what they need. When you can help them, you help them out in a practical way. That's what families are for. We help each other.
- Then you need to give **HOPE**.  
You build each other up rather than tear each other down. You give more strokes than you give pokes. You lift people up, you don't tear them down and criticize them all the time.

## #2 – The Family is a Place to Play

A habitat for happiness. A format for fun. A place to party. God meant for the family to be a place where you let down, kick back, relax and enjoy life.

### **Ecclesiastes 9:9**

*"Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love."*

### **Proverbs 5:18**

*"Be happy with your wife and find your joy with the girl you married."*

A lot of homes I've been in, I'd like to say one thing to them -- "Lighten up!" Some people take this last principle about the learning center so seriously they turn their home into a boot camp and they're listening to Dobson five times a day and they're so uptight they're going to do the wrong thing in the wrong way, they don't have any fun in their house. The father becomes the drill sergeant. It's like the guy in the *Sound of Music* that had the silly whistle that he'd blow and the kids would march in and march out. He's trying to turn them into an army.

When my kids were little they weren't impressed at all that I've been a pastor since 1980. They couldn't really care that I've been around the world numerous times sharing the love of Christ. They really couldn't care that I've written my first book.

What they wanted to know is, Am I fun? Do I have fun with them? Am I a fun guy? (You know what one fungus said to the other fungus? Are you a fun-gi?) In our home over the years when the kids were growing up, we took we called a "Family Day" from school. It was our day to skip school together and just have fun!

If you don't have a reputation for fun in your home, don't be surprised when the kids get out on their own, that they don't want to come back home real often. It's not known as an enjoyable place to be. You need to learn to play with your family.

Would you agree that kids are inherently funny? They are! Chuck Swindoll says, "Mealtimes are good times for character training and many years ago Cynthia and I decided we all needed to work on our table manners. We were beginning to look and sound more like a pen of pigs than a home of humans. So before supper, I whispered to Curtis who was six that he should serve Carissa who was four before he served himself. Naturally he wondered why since the platter of chicken set directly in front of him and he was as hungry as a lion. I explained that it is polite for fellows to serve girls before they serve themselves. This rule sounded weird but he was willing as long as she didn't take too long. You'd never believe what occurred.

"After prayer, he picked up the huge platter, held it out for his sister, asked which piece of chicken she wanted. She relished all the attention. Being quite young, however, she had no idea which piece was which. So, very seriously she replied, "I'd like the foot." He glanced in my direction, frowned at the hunger pains shooting through his stomach, then looked back at her and said, "Carissa, Mother doesn't cook the foot." To which she replied, "Where is it?" With increased anxiety, he answered a bit louder, "I don't know. The foot is somewhere else, not on

this platter. Look, choose a piece and hurry up!" She studied the platter and said, "OK, just give me the hand."

"By now their mother and father were biting their lips to restrain from laughing out loud. We would have intervened but decided instead to let them work it out alone. That's a part of the training process. "A chicken doesn't have a hand. It only has wings, Carissa." "I hate wings, Curtis! Oh, go ahead and just give me the head!"

"By then, I was headed for the bathroom. I couldn't hold my laughter any longer. Curt was totally beside himself. His sister was totally frustrated, not being able to get the piece of chicken she wanted. Realizing his irritation with her, in the absence of a foot, or a hand or a head she finally said in an exasperated tone, "Oh, all right! I'll take the belly button!"

"That did it! He reached in, grabbed a piece and said, "That's the best I can do!" He gave her the breast which was about as close to the belly button as he could get."

Where do you get that kind of humor except in a home?

**Psalm 127:3-5**

*"Children are a gift from God. They are his reward. Children are like sharp arrows. Happy is the man whose quiver is full of them!"*

I'm not going to interpret that verse! .

You only have your kids for a season. They're not going to be around forever. I'm increasingly aware of the fact that that time is getting shorter and shorter. I want to make that time count. So make your home a place to play!

**How to turn a home into a fun zone...**

- **Relax**  
Lighten up. Don't take things so seriously all the time.
- **Rejoice**  
Take time to celebrate. Find the little things in life to celebrate about, and then throw a party! Don't be afraid to make some noise, make a big deal out of it.
- **Radical**  
Think out of the comfort zone of your life and surprise your family.
- **Record**  
Record the good times. Record the memories; take pictures, take videos. At a funeral, they never show pics of sad times; they always show the good stuff. Give them plenty to choose from.

### #3 – The Family is a Learning Center for Life

You learn things in your family you'd never learn anywhere else. It's a learning center.

In the family, you learn the most basic skills of life. You learn how to walk, how to talk, how to eat, how to use a TV remote -- basic skills that you have to have in life. You learn those things with your family. God wants your family to be a learning center.

#### **Psalm 144:12**

*"May our sons in their youth be like plants that grow up strong."*

The Bible calls the family a garden. It's a garden for growing people. You grow and the rest of the family grows too.

#### **Ephesians 6:4**

*"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*

Circle "training" and "instruction". A lot of training is simply knowing which end of the child to pat. The head or the rear. But you want to move your kids through three stages. You want to move them from parent control to self control to God's control. That's your goal. You move them from parent control where you have to tell them what to do, to self control -- they know what to do, to God control where they're asking "Father, what do You want me to do with my life?" That's what training is all about.

#### **Luke 2:52**

*"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and with man."*

This is an important verse not only for parenting but also for personal growth. In this passage it says that you grow, you develop as a person four ways: Jesus grew in wisdom, that means He grew intellectually. He grew in stature, physical development. He grew in favor with God, that's spiritual development. And He grew in favor with man -- that's social development. As a parent you want to help your child develop balanced growth in all four of these areas. As a person, you want to individually develop growth in all four of these areas. You need to grow physically, spiritually, intellectually and socially. And develop in all four of these areas. If you do, you have balance.

There are three areas in your life that you don't leave home without. As parents we need to be especially concerned about teaching these three areas.

### **What you learn from your family:**

#### **1. We learn relationships from our family.**

Right or wrong, good or bad, you learned how to relate to people from your family. Many of you had to relearn certain things later on in life because you learned how to relate in a dysfunctional way. If you don't learn the right way of relating, you're going to learn the wrong way of relating in families. Your

happiness in life to a large degree is determined by how you get along with people. If you can't get along with people, you're going to be miserable in life.

One of the things as parents we must be interested in doing is teaching our kids how to relate. We need to model for them good relationships -- that it takes honesty to make a relationship work, that it takes vulnerability to make a relationship work, that relationships don't just happen, it takes energy and effort and that you've got to have a lot of forgiveness if you're going to make a relationship work. Are you teaching those things to your kids? Are you teaching them how to respond to other people? Are you teaching them how to get along with people that are different from them? Are you modeling for them how to resolve conflict? Or do you just hide it and deny it and pretend it just doesn't exist? We learn relationships in the family.

## 2. We learn character in the family.

Character is more caught than it is taught. The older I get, the more I see how much like my dad I really am. That's scary! You know the old phrase "Like father like son" -- you can't help but be influenced by your parents, whether you want to or not. I've heard people say, "I'm not going to be like my mom if it's the last thing I do!" And you know what happens! We pick up character.

My kids are going to pick up good character from me or they're going to pick up bad character. I make the difference, the choice. And you do too.

## 3. We learn values.

We learn what's really important in life. Growing up in your family for right or wrong, good or bad, you learned about the value of money, sex, relationships, failure, success. You learned either how to tackle problems head on or how to run from them in denial. You learned how to either face life or flee from life. We pick up values from those around us. It's important that we teach the right values. You're teaching values either intentionally or unintentionally in your family.

### **Isaiah 38:19**

*"One generation makes known your faithfulness to the next."*

Your family is a relay of values from one generation to the next. You are just a link in a long, long chain. You, the person that you are, were influenced by the way your parents were raised, by their parents, by their parents...

It goes the other way too. And that helps me remember that when I'm training my kids, I'm not just raising my own kids, I'm influencing future generations. The way I train my kids is going to influence the way they train theirs and that will impact the way they train theirs...

Your training in your own family isn't affecting just your own family. It's going to affect generations as you have been affected by generations.

I'm not interested so much in the legacy that you've had or that I've had. But what kind of legacy are you leaving for your kids? I feel that many people are leaving *TV Guide*. That's what they're going to leave as a legacy for their kids. I would say to you that you should determine in your life, regardless of my past -- it may be a bad past, a past of alcoholism and divorce and abuse -- and you say, "I'm going to break the chain! I'm starting a new legacy." Some of you became believers in the last year and you say, "From now on our family is going to be an influence for good and I'm going to leave my kids not with wealth, not with a big bank account but with spiritual riches and a spiritual heritage that they can pull on that when they go

through storms they know that other generations before them went through the same storms and they can handle it because God is with them.

You choose your legacy you're going to leave for your kids and their kids and their kids. If you aren't thinking about it you're leaving it up to chance. I have heard this phrase. "I'm not going to impose my spiritual values on my kids. I'm going to just let them make their own decision." Have you ever heard that line? What they're saying -- the translation is, "I'm abdicating my role as a parent to the television." Because your kids are going to pick up values either good ones from you or bad ones from the world and it's your choice. When a person says "I'm not going to force my kids to come to church," or "I'm not going to impose my spiritual values on my children," what they're basically saying is that God is an option. And He is not! He's not an option. The Bible says that one day as parents we will be judged for how well we did at transmitting values.

### **Deut. 6:6-7**

*"These commandments, impress them That means take action, take the initiative! upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."* Teaching values is a part of our job description as parents.

### **How to turn a home into a classroom...**

- **Teacher**

You're the teacher; it's your job to teach them well. You're the faculty staff in your home and they are your students. You must teach them values, morals, etc.

- **Tactical**

You must have a tactical plan; which means you go into with some type of a game plan and not just flying by the seat of your pants. Care enough to plan something. Teachers always have a lesson plan when they teach, so should you. The devil has a plan for your kids and those you're mentoring, so should you!

- **Tact**

There are times when you have to be firm with your family and friends but please use tact. There are times when you have to be firm with your kids and not let them get away from whatever it is they are participating in. Some people call it, "tough love"; but use tact when doing so. Remember it's tough "love" – some people leave out the love!

### **Ephesians 6:4**

*"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*

- **Talent**

Your kids or those to whom you are mentoring all have natural talents, something that they are good at; something that they enjoy doing and do it well. Help them to find that talent and then encourage them to use it for the Lord as they move forward.

#### #4 – The Family is a Launch Pad for Life

Your family can become a team in ministry and a launch pad for life. If you really want a strong family, a strongly knit family, nothing, absolutely nothing, binds and unifies a family closer together than having everybody know the Lord and serve the Lord together. Nothing does a better job of binding a family together. Not hobbies, not family reunions or anything else. When you're serving the Lord together there is a glue that's going to last clear into eternity. This family of believers will outlast even your physical family.

A good example of this is in...

#### **I Corinthians 16:15**

*"Stephanas and his family were the first to become Christians in Greece and they are spending their lives helping and serving Christians everywhere."*

We've got a lot of families who do this here at Eastgate, who use their families as a launch pad for ministry. There are tons of people here who've opened their homes for small group meetings, Bible studies, connection groups, etc. You could do that. We have many who teach in the Sunday School, teaching a class together. Many of you could do that. We have others who've started individual ministries by their family.

If you want to build a strong family, you need to know the Lord and you need to help everyone in your family come to know the Lord.

#### **Acts 16:34**

*"The whole family was filled with joy because they had come to believe in God."*

The greatest gift you can give your children, if you're a parent, is not a will, is not a living trust, it's not a bunch of money. The greatest gift you can give your children is a godly parent. A Mom or Dad who knows Jesus Christ.

Fathers, if you are a believer, your number one priority in life is not your job. First, it's your relationship to God personally. Then it is your relationship to your wife. And then your primary responsibility is that you help your kids feel God's love. That's your job. They need to feel and experience the love of God coming through you. And then you need to lead them to know Jesus Christ and love Him back.

I'm thrilled that all three of my kids are in the kingdom. They've all made their individual decisions for Christ. On their own, they've come to know Him. I thank the Lord that they are serving Him. Because no matter how big this church gets, if my kids didn't know the Lord, I'm a failure. No matter what kind of IMPACT Eastgate goes on to make in the future, it's all in vain if my kids don't know God! We're talking about eternal destinies here. You should be praying for the salvation of everyone in your family -- brothers, sisters, moms, dads, children, grandchildren. You should be praying that they would all come to know Christ too. It's that important.

#### **Romans 12:13**

*"When God's children are in need help them out! And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night."*

**Isaiah 38:19**

*"One generation makes known your faithfulness to the next."*

Here is a ministry that every family can do. Your family can have the ministry of hospitality. That means inviting Christians into your home. It is amazing to me that many believers have never had any other Christians in their home. Their kids have ever had the value of being exposed to other Christians.

I grew up in a home where this was standard procedure. My dad had the gift of giving. My mom had the gift of hospitality. My mom probably fed 10,000 meals to other people in the years that I grew up. Every night somebody was coming. They may have been on the extreme of that but there was a constant parade of good people, people with values, people who were believers coming through our home. As a little kid, I grew up learning, Christians are normal people. Some of that rubbed off on me. You need to expose your own children to godly people. Have them into your home. Invite them in. Open up your home for a home Bible study for small groups so that regularly there is more being put into your home than just the TV.

**How to turn a home into a Space Station...**

- **Footprint**

It's time to let them make their own footprint in the sands of life. It's time to let them make an IMPACT in life. When you see pictures of the men on the moon, you see their footprint. They made that IMPACT. A footprint is made at the hospital when your kids were born, now let them make a footprint in life.

- **Fail**

You'll have to let them fail at times. It's when they go through those failures that they begin to realize the success that they can achieve.

- **Faithful**

You have to be there when they need you, even after they've left. Space Stations go nowhere. They're always there. The astronauts go back and forth; but they always know their Space Station is there.

- **Free**

Let them go. You've done your part, now let them be free. Trust them over to God. Not easy to do, but it must be done.

**Conclusion:**

**Conclusion:**

The family and the fragmentation of the family is causing enormous problems in our society today. Awhile back there was a report that came out called "A Report to the Nation: Marriage in America". It was released by a group of nonpartisan -- not democrat or republican -- organization of academics, public policy experts and family experts. They said that the result of the devaluation and fragmentation of the family in our society has produced these effects:

- A 500% increase of juvenile violent crime.
- Teenage suicide rate has tripled.
- The eating disorders among adolescent girls has soared.
- The poverty rate for children has increased from 15% to 22% in America.

The current generation of children and youth is the first in our nation's history to be less well off psychologically, socially, economically and morally than their parents were at the same age the report says. The study blames the shift in the shift away from values in the institution of marriage and family to the values of individualism, choice and personal liberty. In other words, selfishness and stubbornness are killing the family. "I've got to do what's best for me... I've got to think of my career...etc."

I want to challenge you this morning to be and do like Joshua said in...

**Joshua 24:15**

*"As for me and my house we're going to serve the Lord."*

I don't care what the rest of the world does, but as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.

Have you said that? Have you made that public statement? Have you made that commitment in your marriage and in your family that no matter what else happens, we're going to be a family that's known as serving the Lord and we're going to set up a legacy for future generations? I challenge you to do that.

You say, "What about those of us who are single? Who aren't married?" Several things:

1. Don't forget the relatives you still have. Parents that may be alive, brothers and sisters. They're family.
2. Pray for those who are married and pray for their marriages.
3. Realize that the Bible says the church is to be a family for those who don't have nuclear families. We are a family. Eastgate is to do these same four things. Eastgate is to be a shelter from storms. Eastgate is to be a learning center for life. Eastgate is to be a place to play. And Eastgate is to be a launch pad for ministry. Get involved in God's family and don't just sit and have a pity party. Get involved in God's family. It'll make a difference in your life. It'll make a difference in our society. It'll make an IMPACT in every area of your life – and you'll have healthier relationships in the process!

**You watch... you wait... you'll see!**