

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 1 - You Are Here

Introduction - We are natural-born question askers. Before children leave home, they will ask more than 250,000 questions. Question asking is hardwired into our hearts from birth. Questions such as...

- Where do I belong?
- Where do I fit?
- What is my purpose?
- Is my life significant?

The **home** is the first place where we find answers to our deepest questions. So where did your home receive the authority to take on such a big job? How does a **home** answer these questions? These answers impact the generations that follow.

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses paints a beautiful picture of a **land** that God gives his people to possess. It is a land where each **family** lives in a home and enjoys life together:

*These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, **2** so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. **3** Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you. Deuteronomy 6:1-3*

We all long for a place to call home.

[\[video clip for session 1\]](#)

Home is where my family discusses life and God.

***4** Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **5** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. **6** These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. **7** 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. **8** Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. **9** Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:4-9*

Does your family recognize God as the provider of your home?

***10** When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not*

build, 11 houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, 12 be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Deuteronomy 6:10-12

How is the culture around you shaping your home?

Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. 14 Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; Deuteronomy 6:13-14

What story is your home writing?

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing and journaling the following questions:

1. Where were each of you born?
2. Describe your hometown? (If you live close, plan a field trip.)
3. What is the best part of coming home each night?
4. How does our family live out the culture around us?
5. How does our family go against the grain? How do we live against the culture?

Deuteronomy 6 ends with a son asking a question:

20 In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" 21 tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 Before our eyes the Lord sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. 23 But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. 24 The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. 25 And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness." Deuteronomy 6:20-25

When your child asks about your family story, what will you say?

What is your family's story? The Family Project series seeks to help you write that story. We hope you will join us as we teach through this series during our weekend service(s) and that you will make time for a home group to go deeper with the series.

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 2 - Let Us Make Man

Introduction - "Human beings have an innate desire to connect, to experience dynamic relationships with one another. And, the deepest, most intimate relationship exists in the marital bond between husband and wife. What is the source of this human longing?"

Considering all biblical information, God exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This Trinitarian construct has profound implications both for God and human beings. Rather than a mathematical or mere conceptual depiction, God as Trinity indicates that God, in essence, is relational. There is an internal dynamic that characterizes the God who created. Interestingly, ancient theologians used the word "*perichoresis*" (lit. "a dancing around") to describe this dynamic relationality of God.

Because of this inherent relationality, God appropriately is described fundamentally as "love" (1 John 4:7, NIV), since authentic love occurs only in relationship. The triune God created humans to exist in relationship, not isolation, just as God exists in eternal relationship as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Hence "man" (Heb. *adam*) who bears the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) consists of male and female to exist in relationship. In this fundamental way, human beings reflect the image of God – we long to connect in meaningful ways to one another." - Gary Brantley

Man is uniquely made in the image of God—but what must we understand about that image to know who we are?

[\[video clip for session 2\]](#)

The Imago Dei

We are created in the image of the Triune God.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
Genesis 1:26

As God's image bearers, we have dominion over the fish, birds and animals.

Because we are created in the image of God, every human being has value and is worthy of love.

"The image of God in which man was and is made has been variously explained in detail. Although scholars may differ on the nuances of the phrase, there is general agreement that it has to do with dignity, destiny, and freedom.

The assertion that man is made in God's image shows each man his true dignity and worth. As God's image-bearer, he merits infinite respect. God's claims on us must be taken with total seriousness. No human being should ever be thought of as simply a cog in a machine, or mere means to an end.

The assertion points also to each man's true destiny. Our Maker so designed us that our nature finds final satisfaction and fulfillment only in a relationship of responsive Godlikeness—which means, precisely, that state of correspondence between our acts and God's will which we call obedience. Living that is obedient will thus be teleological—progressively realizing our telos (Greek for “end” or “goal”).

Also the assertion confirms the genuineness of each man's freedom. Experience tells us that we are free, in the sense that we make real choices between alternatives and could have chosen differently, and theology agrees. Self-determining freedom of choice is what sets God and his rational creatures apart from, say, birds and bees, as moral beings.” (Your Father Loves You by James Packer, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986).

He created both man and woman to be an image bearer. We have equal value, but bear his image in different ways.

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

We are the image and likeness of God to the world.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing and journaling the following questions:

1. Where do we as family find our value and meaning?
2. How does it make you feel to know you are special, worthy and extremely valuable to God?
3. Did you image the likeness of God in creation today? How?
4. How do men and women bear God's image in different ways?
5. What could we do to better image God's likeness tomorrow?

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 3 - It's Not Good To Be Alone

Introduction - Humanity's first and most fundamental problem was isolation.

[\[video clip for session 3\]](#)

God solved this problem by joining Adam and Eve in a *relationship* to fully reflect His image in the world.

Where does man find freedom from isolation?
How does man escape loneliness?

God said it was “not good” that man be alone.

God created Adam and placed him in Eden to work.

8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:8-9

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Genesis 2:15

God's purpose for man is not limited to work. He created Adam to be with another. Adam was created for relationship.

18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” 19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

*“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.” Genesis 2:18-23*

When Adam sees Eve he begins to sing.

In verse 19 we have Adam naming the animals: "That's a cow. I'll call that one an eagle. That will be called elephant. That's a raven. That's a zebra." When Adam sees Eve, he sings a song: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." It probably went like this, "Woooooomaaaaaan!"

God walked Eve down the aisle to Adam. That introduction was their wedding.

Solomon says we should enjoy marriage in the midst of the grind of our work:

Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Ecclesiastes 9:9

Second only to your salvation, your wedding day is the greatest day of your life. Your salvation committed you to Christ. Your wedding joins you to your spouse.

Enjoying life with your spouse is one more way in which we image God to the world.

*He who finds a wife finds a good thing
and obtains favor from the Lord. Proverbs 18:22*

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1. Mom and Dad: Share details from your wedding with your children. What was the best part? What would you change?
2. Take some time to picture a special future with your children. Dream with them about their weddings. Right down the details so you have something to share at their weddings years from now.
3. How does marriage solve the problems of isolation and loneliness?
4. What are some ways marriage shows others who God is?

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Part 4 - For This Reason

Introduction - God unites the first two humans in a wedding and commands them to be **fruitful and multiply**. What does this tell us about God—and about ourselves as bearers of His image?

The union of the man and woman is one of the clearest representations of God's image.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 2:24

Our children will not be with us forever and need to plan accordingly.

These words, first given in the garden of Eden, were given to a couple with no biological parents. One must wonder if God was instructing Adam and Eve on how they were to raise their children, rather than giving them a teaching for their own marriage. We have no record of the conversation, but I wonder when Adam and Eve first taught the “leave and cleave” of marriage to Cain and Abel? I’m thinking earlier, rather than later.

Marriage is a priority relationship that trumps your relationship with your parents. When you see the word *leave* you may think you need to move a thousand miles away from mom and dad. While there are some cases where that is beneficial, it is not necessary. The focus of this text is not *geographical*. Most couples live in close proximity to their parents and move away later in life. The focus of this text is *relational* and *emotional* leaving.

“Leaving” is the idea that no relationship, apart from your relationship with God, is more important than your marriage. Your spouse, not your parent, is your new priority relationship. To leave mom and dad means to forsake, depart from, leave behind, and abandon your family of origin.

The emphasis of Genesis 2:24 is a young man or woman leaving their family of origin and immediately entering into marriage. However, today that is not always the case. Young people are leaving home and living single for longer periods of time. There is now a gap between leaving and cleaving.

Scripturally and historically, there are two life phases: *child* and *man*. This transition is explained by the apostle Paul when he wrote, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me” (1 Cor. 13:11).

Traditionally, going from a child to man meant:

- Leaving home
- Completing an apprenticeship or formal education
- Finding employment
- Getting married
- Starting a family

In generations past, these five adulthood milestones happened quickly, if not simultaneously. There was no prolonged track for entering into adulthood. You left home prepared for the responsibility of work, wife and the world. Parents sent children out as adults, not on a journey to become one. This is the heart behind “Be fruitful and multiply.”

[\[video clip for session 4\]](#)

Marriage is the first building block of family. Our children have a front row seat to the marriage, which makes our marriage a primary parenting tool.

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing and journaling the following questions:

1. What does it look like to leave home emotionally, relationally, and financially?
2. Why do you think Genesis 2:24 is just as much a parenting verse as it is a marriage verse?
3. At what age do you think it is best to start teaching your kids that they will not be with Mom and Dad forever and they need to start planning accordingly? Why?
4. What is the scariest part of children leaving home?
5. In what ways are you not allowing your children to leave home?
6. What “strings” do you need to start cutting?

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 5 - Like One of Us

Introduction - In the Fall, a family was divided. But redemption also came through a family.

God commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

*And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Genesis 2:16-17*

God placed man in the Garden to tend and watch over it. Everything God created in the Garden was available to Adam and Eve for their enjoyment. But he commanded them to not eat of the Tree of Knowledge or Good and Evil. The judgment from eating of that tree was death.

Satan tempted Adam by denying God's spoken word with 3 big lies:

1. You will not die.
2. Your eyes will be opened.
3. You will be like God.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

*He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" **2** And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, **3** but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" **4** But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." **6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. **7** Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. Genesis 3:1-7*

When Adam sinned, he brought death and condemnation to 4 key relationships:

1. Man and God (eternal death and separation from God)
2. Man and himself (guilt, self-loathing, insecurity, and shame)
3. Man and others (blame-shifting, disrupted family relationships, murder)
4. Man and earth (grueling work, thorns)

One family brought condemnation. One family brought redemption.

*For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. **18** Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. **19** For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.* Romans 5:17-19

Satan broke up the married couple to ultimately attack the Trinity. Satan is against the image of God, which is why he is at all out worth against the family. However, Jesus rescues us from our hopeless, helpless state and makes us acceptable to God. This is the Good News. God redeems broken people. God redeems broken families through Jesus. God uses family to defeat the enemy.

[\[video clip for session 5\]](#)

Jesus breathes life into dead people. Jesus breathes life into dead marriages and families.

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing and journaling the following questions:

- Why do you think we so easily overlook everything God gives us to enjoy and pursue what he tells us to avoid?
- How are we tempted today by Satan's 3 big lies?
- How can God use our family to defeat Satan?

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 6 - What God Has Joined Together

Introduction - God's design for family is essential to the health of every culture. Social science and practical experience prove this.

Who gives definition to family? Who defines it?

How does a biblical definition of marriage and family direct us as we engage the culture around issues such as...

Civil unions?

Modern vs. Postmodern family?

Delayed marriage?

Divorcing because we are no longer happy/compatible?

[\[video clip for session 6\]](#)

God's heart is for faithfulness and permanence in marriage – “Until death do us part.”

13 And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. 14 But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 16 “For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.” Malachi 2:13-16

The prophet Malachi links character to commitment when he says, “*the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.*” (2:14).

Faithfulness is an attribute of God. We depend on His faithfulness. We model His faithfulness to a world that is anything but faithful. Faithfulness follows through on our commitment regardless of difficulty.

Attacks on Marital Faithfulness

1. Unhappiness - "I want to be happy."
2. Entitlement - "I deserve better."
3. Incompatibility - "There's someone out there better for me."
4. Conflict - "No one should have to put up with that."
5. Issues - "We have a _____ problem."
6. Independence - "I need to be free from this." "I need to find myself."
7. Minimizing - "I'd rather see a divorce than a murder."
8. Exhaustion - "We've tried everything to make it work."
9. Chemistry - "He/she changed."
10. Sin - "He/she won't change."

Faithfulness to your marriage vows, speaks directly to your faithfulness to God.

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing and journaling the following questions:

1. As painful as it may be, discuss how divorce has impacted your family.
2. If someone in your family has been divorced (your parents, brothers and sisters, children, grandchildren), how does that trickle down to affect you?
3. What must a couple do to stay faithful to the **“Until death do us part”** vows?
4. What must we do to break the generational curse of divorce in our family?

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The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 7 - Mothers as Image Bearers

Introduction - The relationship between mother and child exemplifies the nurturing care of the God of the universe. I am so grateful for the ministry of Focus on the Family and how they have not back down for one minute on the sanctity of human life:

Focus on the Family opposes abortion under all circumstances, except in the rare instance when the mother's life is threatened by continuing the pregnancy.

At Focus on the Family, we are dedicated to defending the sanctity of human life, and by human life we mean God's creation from fertilization to natural death. In the beginning, God created the earth and everything in it, including humans. As it says in Psalm 139:13, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb."

We believe that every human, in every condition from the single cell stage of development to natural death, is made in God's image and possesses inestimable worth. Abortion runs contrary to these beliefs.

Mom gives life.

*For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb. Psalm 139:13*

Mom cares.

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem. Isaiah 66:13

[[video clip for session 7](#)]

Mom teaches.

*Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and forsake not your mother's teaching,
9 for they are a graceful garland for your head
and pendants for your neck. Proverbs 1:8-9*

Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a central role in God redeeming man.

She was there at Jesus' birth.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2:7

She was there at Jesus' death.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.
John 19:26-27

Jesus loved and cared for his mom.

When you're young and living at home, you are commanded to obey your parents. Ephesians 6:1–3 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'—which is the first commandment with a promise—"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." As adults, we do not obey our parents. We no longer call them to find out what our next move in life should be. We no longer ask them for permission to take a vacation or a trip. Obedience ends, but honor never does. Honor means to esteem as highly valuable. God takes honor so seriously that He gives strong words to those who would dishonor their parents:

He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach. Proverbs 19:26

Honor your parents by calling home and thanking them for a life lesson they taught you as a kid. Since you have left home financially, pay for their meal the next time you eat out with them. I know what you are thinking, "They have way more money than I do, so it makes more sense that they pay." That's not the point. Pay to show honor. Instead of buying your mom another sweater or cat calendar, write them a blessing and share it before family and friends at the next family holiday.

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing and journaling the following questions:

1. Let's start by saying, "Thank you," to mom for giving birth to us!
2. Go around the table and have each person speak 3 words of high value over mom.
3. How does a mom best image God to the world?
4. How do we best care for our aging mothers?

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 8 - Fathers as Image Bearers

Introduction - God as “Father” is more than a motif; it is central to His nature and core to our being.

[\[video clip for session 8\]](#)

The presence and participation of the father changes everything. When dad is angry or goes passive, the home goes dead.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

A father is an image of divine authority. Our earthy dad paints a picture for us (in word and deed) of Heavenly Father.

If your father was a pushy man who was inconsiderate of you, or who violated and used you, you may see God in the same way. You probably feel cheap or worthless in God’s eyes, and perhaps feel that you deserve to be taken advantage of by others.

If your father was like a drill sergeant, demanding more and more from you with no expression of satisfaction, or burning with anger with no tolerance for mistakes, you may have cast God in his image.

If your father was a weakling, and you couldn’t depend on him to help you or defend you, your image of God may be that of a weakling. You may feel that you are unworthy of God’s comfort and support, or that He is unable to help you.

If your father was overly critical and constantly came down hard on you, or if he didn’t believe in you or your capabilities and discouraged you from trying, you may perceive God in the same way. You don’t feel as if you’re worth God’s respect or trust..

If your father was patient, you are more likely to see God as patient and available for you. You feel that you are worth God’s time and concern.

If your father was a giving man, you may perceive God as someone who gives to you and supports you. You feel that you are worth God’s support and encouragement.

If your father accepted you, you tend to see God accepting you regardless of what you do.

If your father protected you, you probably perceive God as your protector in life.
(*Always Daddy’s Girl* by H. Norman Wright, 1989, Regal Books, pp. 193-195)

Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of Ephesians 6:4 in *The Message*: “*Fathers, don’t exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.*”

The father has a priestly role.

And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

Malachi 4:6

Our heavenly Father loves and pursues us through Jesus.

God has only one love language. A love language is simply the way we give and receive love. What is God's love language? Worship? Prayer? Singing? Reading His Word? All of these disciplines are good, but they are secondary to God's primary love language.

John 3:16 answers the question of how God gives love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son." God showed us love by giving us His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins.

There is only one way we show God love. Jesus clearly identified His Father's love language when He said, *"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.... If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."* (John 14:21, 23–24)

In short, Jesus is God's love language. When we love Jesus and observe all that He taught, we show the Father love. When we love Jesus and keep His commands, we connect to the Father. Jesus did nothing without His Father. God sent Jesus, who received authority from His Father. If you want your children to know God, they must know Jesus intimately. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing the following questions:

1. How does/did your dad paint a picture of God for you?
2. Why is it so important for dad to engage, rather than just observe, in the home?
3. Take a few minutes to speak words of blessing over dad tonight.
4. If you have unresolved anger towards your dad, what steps do you need to take in forgiving him?

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 9 - Children as Image Bearers

Introduction - Children matter in the Christian story. Every child is a divine statement of blessing. The bond between father, mother and child reflects the triune God.

Jesus valued children.

In the Greco-Roman culture at the time, children were not valued. Childhood was considered an insignificant phase of life. Little boys were valued more than little girls because they could eventually grow up and contribute to the family. For the Hebrew dad that was raising his children to be a part of the bigger family, the children of God, there was a greater value placed on children. Jesus comes in and makes a significant statement:

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:14

Parents provide for children.

Parents provide for their children in 2 ways. They provide for the physical needs and they protect. Yet our best efforts as parents, pale in comparison to how God provides for his children:

Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! Matthew 7: 9-11

Jesus is the most important relationship in a child's life.

This is one of the strongest teachings of Jesus. When you give your life to Jesus, you have a new allegiance and the sword that he is speaking of demands a decision:

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. 36 And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. 37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Matthew 10: 34-37

Children teach us how to follow Jesus.

The humility that children teach us consists of child-like trust, vulnerability. You know it in your kids, that eagerness to learn, that eagerness to know things, and the inability to advance their own cause apart from help, direction, and the resources of the parent. They are dependent. Jesus says we have a lot to learn from a child in the way a child comes to know Him:

And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them 3 and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:2-4

[\[video clip for session 9\]](#)

We are the children of God.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:1-2

...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. Galatians 3:26

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing and journaling the following questions:

1. Mom and Dad: Spend some time sharing with your children about the day they were born.
2. What do children teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven?
3. Is Jesus the priority relationship in your home?
4. What are some ways our culture devalues children?
5. What can our family do to value the children of our community and world?

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 10 - The Enemy

Introduction - What is the greatest force aligning against the family today?

On September 11, 2001, The United States of America experienced an evil that caught us off guard. We were not prepared. We did not have the enemy sized up properly. Our guard was down. The 9/11 Commission Report explains the threat this way:

We learned about an enemy who is sophisticated, patient, disciplined, and lethal. The enemy rallies broad support in the Arab and Muslim world by demanding redress of political grievances, but its hostility toward us and our values is limitless. Its purpose is to rid the world of religious and political pluralism, the plebiscite, and equal rights for women. It makes no distinction between military and civilian targets. Collateral damage is not in its lexicon. . . .

We learned that the institutions charged with protecting our borders, civil aviation, and national security did not understand how grave this threat could be, and did not adjust their policies, plans, and practices to deter or defeat it. . . . The test before us is to sustain that unity of purpose and meet the challenges now confronting us.

We need to design a balanced strategy for the long haul, to attack terrorists and prevent their ranks from swelling while at the same time protecting our country against future attacks.

This report reminds us of the enemy attacking our family and warns us to have a plan:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Ephesians 6:10-13

Satan is sophisticated, patient, disciplined, and lethal. He hates your family and the thought of your marriage modeling the gospel of Jesus. He will utilize everything in his arsenal to destroy your marriage. His strategy is to ruin not only your marriage, but also the future marriages of your children. He methodically attempts to tear apart your marriage and works for collateral damage.

We must understand how grave this threat really is. We have been given the armor of God to protect our marriages and families. It is not an accident that Ephesians 6:10-13 follows the Bible's central teaching on marriage and family in Ephesians 5:22–6:4. The test before us is to sustain the unity of purpose and meet the challenges now confronting us. We need to understand our enemy and design a strategy for the long haul, to put on the full armor of God and prevent Satan from future attacks. No weapon formed against us shall prosper.

The World hates your family.

*If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. **19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

John 15:18-19

The Devil hates your family.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. Genesis 3:1

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 1 Peter 5:8-9*

Satan is the "Prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). While God is ultimately in control, he allows Satan to operate on this earth. Satan has been given domain over unbelievers, not believers. Followers of Jesus are no longer under the rule of Satan (Colossians 1:13). Unbelievers are caught "in the snare of the devil" (2 Timothy 2:26).

Satan wants to destroy your home. He has his sights set on your marriage. His crosshairs are on your children, and he is using you to get to them.

[\[video clip for session 10\]](#)

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing the following questions:

1. Do you believe that Satan has a battle plan for your home?
2. Do have a battle plan to fight off the attacks of Satan?
3. How do we prepare our children for the world without becoming overprotective?
4. Are you praying protection over your children each day?

Prayer: Samuel Rodriguez is a national speaker and a leader for the National Hispanic Evangelical Association. From the time he was a small child, his dad prayed this prayer over him: "Father, cover Sammy in the blood of Jesus, protect him from evil, fulfill your purpose in his life." That simple 3 part prayer is a great place to start. Pray it over them.

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 11 - The Great Mystery

Introduction - Marriage foreshadows the future of every Christian: the wedding of Christ to His Bride, the Church. Life does not end at death. The follower of Jesus anticipates a great wedding feast.

Death is not the end, but the beginning.

[\[video clip for session 11\]](#)

*A good name is better than precious ointment,
and the day of death than the day of birth.
2 It is better to go to the house of mourning
than to go to the house of feasting,
for this is the end of all mankind,
and the living will lay it to heart.
3 Sorrow is better than laughter,
for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. Ecclesiastes 7:1-3*

What does it mean to take death to heart? Why is a funeral better than a party? Simple. You learn great life lessons at a funeral. No one ever walks out of a comedy club or party and says, "That changed my life." That is not the purpose of laughter or cutting up with friends. Proverbs calls that levity "cheerful medicine" (17:22). **But when you go to a funeral you ask questions about your own life.** Am I living well? Will anyone say nice things about me when I'm gone? Will I have this many people at my funeral? Did I say everything to grandpa I should have said? Did he know how much I loved him?

Funerals recalibrate life's priorities. The frantic pace of life changes and everything goes on hold when we get the call that a loved one died. Chasing a buck seems senseless. Squabbling over finances wastes time. Death brings perspective.

I love that moment in a funeral when sorrow briefly turns to joy. It's not that our mourning is over, but we have a glimpse of joy in knowing our believing loved one is with Jesus and we will be reunited one day:

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. **14** For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. **15** For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together*

with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

When the funeral goes graveside, that is when you stand and proclaim Jesus over the grave:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

56 *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 15:55-57*

6 *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,*

“Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God

the Almighty reigns.

7 *Let us rejoice and exult*

and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

8 *it was granted her to clothe herself*

with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

9 *And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”*

10 *Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus.*

Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Revelation 19:6-8

You have a wedding invitation waiting to be opened. A wedding is the beginning of something. It marks union with God as our ultimate destiny.

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing the following questions:

1. Do you have a parent or grandparent who lived life well?
2. Do you have a marriage that your children would say is worth repeating?
3. What was the last funeral we went to and what did we learn?
4. What do you think a wedding reception in heaven will look like?

The Family Project Sermon Series

Part 12 - The Imperfect Family

Introduction - Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram are dangerous outlets for the insecure parent of an imperfect family. Facebook and other types of social media are stressful outlets because most posts are “best foot forward.” On social media, people post carefully edited versions of their families and create their own realities. Families consumed with appearing “perfect” deny reality.

“We know artists by their most important creations: Michelangelo by the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Beethoven by his "Fifth Symphony," George Lucas by the Star Wars saga. Each masterpiece reveals something of its creator.

The same is true of God. We catch a glimpse of the Artist at work by reading the first two chapters of Genesis. He spoke galaxies into existence, formed the mountains, filled the oceans, and planted forests with a magnificent range of color and variety. His playful side is evident in creatures such as humming birds, ostriches and skunks. But the masterpiece that reveals more about God than anything else shows up when God made something called "family" (Genesis 1:27-28).

Two essential elements of family — marriage and parenthood — reveal God's character like nothing else in Creation. The love between a husband and wife provides a glimpse of Christ's passionate devotion to us as His bride. In the same way, the ups and downs of parenthood offer a compelling picture of God's tenderness and patience toward us as His children.” - Kurt Bruner in Thriving Family Magazine

Imperfect families give grace for mistakes and failures.

Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly. Proverbs 26:11

As a family we will make mistakes. Our goal is to offer one another grace for mistakes and avoid repeating mistakes. We want to be gracious and wise. A wise person learns from his or her mistakes.

Imperfect families get the job done, but it is often messy.

*Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean,
but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.* Proverbs 14:4

Farmers need the strength of the ox to plow the field. However, an ox is a large animal and makes a lot of manure. If a farmer wants to get the fields plowed, he must be willing to shovel a little poop. As a family, we have a job to do. We have a purpose and mission in the world. To get the job done, we will need to shovel some poop.

[video clip for session 12]

We are adopted into God's family.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. Ephesians 1:3-9

Adoption is the process through which a person who does not belong to a given family is formally brought into it and made a full, legal family member with the rights and responsibilities of that position. The apostle Paul used the term to illustrate the truth that believers have been given the status of "sonship" in the heavenly family; they can call God "Father" (Rom. 3:15; Gal. 4:6). Adoption makes it clear that our sonship is conferred on us, in distinction from Christ's, which is inherent [The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook, Walter A. Elwell, Editor, (Harold Shaw Pub., Wheaton, IL; 1984), p. 346].

The church is God's family.

but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...Ephesians 2:19

I've been in church my whole life and can testify, "**There are no perfect churches.**" D.A. Carson said it best when he said, "The reason there are so many exhortations in the New Testament for Christians to love other Christians is because . . . the church itself is not made up of natural "friends." It is made up of natural enemies. Christians come together not because they form a natural collocation, but because they have all been saved by Jesus Christ and owe him a common allegiance. In this light we are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake. Christian love will stand out and bear witness to Jesus because it is a display, for Jesus' sake, of mutual love among social incompatibles.

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Spend some time around ***the family table*** this week discussing the following questions:

Do we offer one another grace for mistakes made?

Is our family being redeemed?

Do we know our purpose as a family (to be image bearers to the world)?

What is God calling us to do together for His Kingdom that we can't do alone?