

38. Love your closest neighbor – Part 4

January 18, 2009

Last three weeks we've been studying about loving our closest neighbors, our spouses. This morning we are going to learn about loving our other closest neighbors, our families, our children and our parents. By the way, we are going to put together this four part series "Love your closest neighbor" into a CD packet and make them available at the Chapel Bookstore next Sunday.

One of the most frequently used words that describes the modern day families is "dysfunctional family". And it is rightly so. Many families have been broken apart because of selfishness of husbands and wives, children, moms and dads even grandparents. They insist their feelings over the principles of marriages and families that God sets for us.

Speaking of dysfunctional family, our Father in heaven has the biggest dysfunctional family in the universe. Starting with the first children, Adam and Eve who went haywire – after them, all of their descendants were and are born with sinful nature even though our Father in heaven is perfect.

Whether it is a Christian family or not, many families in America have been fractured and became dysfunctional. Most often fractured families can be directly translated as broken lives.

The first institution God created is family and it is the basic core of society. As the family fractures, so does society. It is one of the main cunning strategies of satan in spiritual warfare.

A. ABANDONED CHILDREN

With abandonment, there is a huge anger issue that comes from the feeling of rejection. According to the recent survey, there are about 70 million abandoned children worldwide. You may say, "That is for the third world countries, not in America." I beg you the difference, because there are more and more grandparents raising their grandchildren because mom and dad decided to go on their ways without their children. To those parents, their own children are hindrance to their careers or lives.

Out of 70 million, about 2 million of them are involved in sex trade in Asia and Africa principally. In our country, the good 'ol U.S.A., 1.5 million children and teenagers are on streets. If all the homeless children and teenagers in one city, it would be the seventh largest city in the United States. I know that we cannot change all of their lives. But we have to ask ourselves, "How can we provide security for our next generation that is standing at the brink of disaster?" The answer is "parental involvement."

B. THE ROYAL DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

The biblical text comes from 2 Samuel chapter 13. You talk about a dysfunctional family, king David's family is the prime candidate for it. Broken relationship, a mighty king yet dysfunctional father, murder, incest, revolt – Hollywood soap opera writers couldn't write more disastrous scripts than this.

King David had 8 wives and many concubines and I am sure that he may even have a few porcupines. Out of 8 wives, he had 19 children if my calculation is correct.

He had a chaos was about to explode. God said in Genesis one man and one wife, and also commanded that a king should not have multiple wives. King David broke all those rules.

His children learned a few bad things from their father.

2 Samuel 13:1-2 After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. 2 Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her.

2 Samuel 13:14 However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

King David was loose, but this kid took it to the whole new level of lowness – raping his half sister.

I don't find anywhere king David teaching his children about how to behave, especially sexuality, since he was not in control with that area, he probably thought that he had no authority over his children for it.

According to survey, less than 5% of Christian parents in the U.S. provide proper sex instruction to their children at home. If we don't teach them about sex, our children will learn from Hollywood and M-TV or VH1. The results of their liberal and ungodly involvements in our children's lives is nothing less than chaos.

2 Samuel 13:21 But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry.

This is what passive king David did about this rape incident in v14. In my math, chaos + passive parent (s) = a major disaster. King David got really mad at the situation, yet he did absolutely nothing against Amnon. He should have punished that rapist.

During this time, Absalom, the brother of Tamar, was watching his dad and was hoping that he would avenge on behalf of his sister. When he saw nothing was happening, he became a juvenile delinquent.

According to Dr. Loren Motion of National Mental Health Association, "Absence of father is the stronger factor than poverty that contributing to juvenile delinquency." Contrary to what politicians put their blame on, Dr. Motion says that absent parenting is a bigger cause than those other factors that are mentioned by politicians. I agree. The cure for the high crime rate is not in the electric chair, rather in the high chair. While children are growing, that is when they really need mom and dad's presence and godly guidance in their lives.

C. RAISING OUR CHILDREN IN GOD'S WAY

I certainly am not a perfect dad, nor my wife is a perfect mom to our children. For that matter none of us are perfect parents. But we can be good and godly parents who try to raise and guide our children in biblical ways. There is one thing you cannot be, if you want to be good and godly parents. It is being passive parents – non-engaging parents, the ones who somehow think that children will grow up by themselves or don't want to discipline them because it might hurt their self-esteem. There is a Greek word for that – hogwash!

None of us can love our children in the way our Father in heaven loves us. He loves us more than we can possibly imagine. Because He loves us, He disciplines us with His love. He doesn't let us get by with our sins. He brings us the consequences that fit our sins.

I've met and talked with some of the parents who don't discipline their children. I say they are ruining their children for the sake of being the children's buddies. Moms and dads, you are parents before you are your children's best friends.

One of king David's children was king Solomon who succeeded his father's throne in later years. He watched how passive his father was and wrote a lot about raising children in his Proverbs. One of the most famous verses you also remember is in chapter 22 of the Book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

What does it mean to say, "Train up a child?" You can not be a passive parent to train up a child, it requires your life and time to engage in the child's life. The word 'train' does not mean you toss a few words every once in a while. The original Hebrew word is 'chanak'. It means 'to dedicate'. You have to dedicate your life and time in your children's lives with guidance from the Holy Spirit. You need to stimulate your child's learning appetite with godliness and your godly examples.

Do you play with your child, and do you pray with your child? Do you dedicate your life to stimulate your child's life? Some of you may be in David's situation – minus an incest and a murder. You were not involved in your child's life for sometime and it seems like there is no way to turn it around. You might say, "It is too late. They are grown ups," or "We have grown too far apart." Are you still that child's mom? Are you still that child's dad? Then it is never too late, unless they absolutely reject you as their parents. But you can still affect their lives from your knees by praying to the Lord. As I have said before, it is not the least thing you can do, but the best thing you can do.

D. BROKEN LIVES AND RESENTFUL CHILDREN

2 Samuel 13:23-29 And it came to pass, after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal Hazor, which is near Ephraim; so Absalom invited all the king's sons. 24 Then Absalom came to the king and said, "Kindly note, your servant has sheepshearers; please, let the king and his servants go with your servant." 25 But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us not all go now, lest we be a burden to you." Then he urged him, but he would not go; and he blessed him. 26 Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" 27 But Absalom urged him; so he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. 28 Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, "Watch now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon!' then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant." 29 So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled.

So what is the reaction of Absalom for his dad's passive attitude? He revenged his sister's disgrace by murdering his half brother. The result of a passive father goes from an incest to a cold blood premeditated murder. What did his father king David do for this?

2 Samuel 13:36-40 So it was, as soon as he had finished speaking, that the king's sons indeed came, and they lifted up their voice and wept. Also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly. 37 But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day. 38 So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39 And King David longed to go to Absalom. For he had been comforted concerning Amnon, because he was dead.

Nothing again. David just didn't get it. He never confronted his son Absalom for his wrong doing.

2 Samuel 15:1-6 After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city are you from?" And he would say, "Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel." 3 Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you." 4 Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." 5 And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. 6 In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Now the unruly son is turning into a monster who wants to throw out his own father from the throne. I tell ya, Absalom is a perfect politician and he knows how to campaign. He promises a change which he has no intention to deliver. What he is actually doing is trying to get the attention of his own father king David who is too passive.

E. THE ROOT PROBLEMS OF PASSIVE PARENTS

Let's learn something valuable from king David, the remorseful dad. There are two reasons for dysfunction in him. If you don't like the word 'dysfunction' because it is a psycho mumbo jumbo, replace with 'malfunction'. Is that better?

1) Proximity without intimacy

It means you are close, but you are not close. You are in the same house physically, yet you are detached emotionally without any intimacy. King David removed his presence and his time from his children and it cost him their lives literally. I am not just talking about dad here. Nowadays, mom is just about busy as dad.

Moms and dads, please listen to me. You can be with your children just about everywhere still far away from them. You can take them to the places – from piano lessons to soccer games, to school plays. Yes, your children might know that you are there. But are you there? Are you going there and going here because you have to or do you want to?

To my shame, I had to admit that I did a few of this obligated attendance for my daughter when she was a child. But I've learned to get to know her by spending time in talking or bumming around together in electronic stores because we both like electronic gadgets.

How to build your boy's life? How to build your girl's life? You saw into their lives with yours.

According to a recent Gallup Poll, 47% of 1000 teenagers were not told "I love you", or no hugs, or no kisses by their parents in past the 24 hours.

2) Dissension without resolution

There was a long time separation between king David and Absalom without any resolution. Eventually Absalom revolted against his own father and the situation developed to a civil war between king David's army and Absalom's army. This is a family feud with a steroid.

Moms and dads, if you have any dissension between you and your children, after this service, please contact them and try to make peace with them with everything you have if it is at all possible. If they refuse, you've done your part.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you have any dissension between you and your parents, please make peace with them after this service if it is at all possible. You tell them, "I love you."

Even if the other side is the one who blew up, you make an initiation to make peace. After all, you are the ones who were forgiven with unconditional love by God, so should you not forgive them with unconditional love? You are Christians and you have power that comes from our Savior Jesus.

Now you are thinking, "Oh great, I came to church to be depressed. I am gonna have a roast preacher for lunch."

F. APPLICATIONS

1) Learn to communicate with your family.

Depending on how you communicate with your children, they will communicate with their children most likely in the same manner.

2) Humble yourself.

Mom and dad, you are not perfect. When you make mistakes against your children, say, "I am sorry. Please forgive me." In my opinion, children are far more forgiving than grown-ups.