

Building Your Life God's Way – Family Relations

Last week I started a new series and we discovered that the best way to build your life is to build it God's way. And the only way to build it God's way is to use the same building materials. When He builds He uses four distinct types of materials; 1) the rock of **Revelation**, 2) the stone of **Consecration**, 3) the pillar **Relation** and 4) the beam of **Generation**. The foundation is made of immovable rock, the structure consists of solid pillars and beams, and the walls are made up of living stones.

God is building a spiritual house, from *spiritual stones*, for the Father to live in (**1 Peter 2:5**). But this house must be established on the solid Rock of Revelation (**Matthew 16:18**). Before God builds He lays an unshakeable foundation on which His family can abide, and this is the **revelation** that Jesus is the Christ.

Every living stone in the spiritual house (the temple) is individually chosen - then separated, measured and cut according to the *Chief Cornerstone* Jesus Christ. This is the necessary act of **consecration** - declaring each stone sacred for divine purposes.

The next stage in God's building process concerns "family," because every stone must mature and grow out of a *joining*. For this reason, a Father **relation** is created. It's only by being *joined together* in relationship with the Father that the living stones can be effectively and correctly placed, and then set, in His house. These multiplied, individual family relationships, and the effectual joining together of each member, is what makes the spiritual house strong. But it doesn't end there, for God builds from generation to **generation**.

Notice, after God has laid a solid foundation, and He has separated each individual *living stone* to make up the walls, the strength of the structure is entirely dependent on its pillars and beams. Pillars and beams symbolise family; starting with the family unit, but including church and community life.

Family is a God idea - the word originated in God. It is rooted in God. God is *the* Father, and the word father expresses the way that God relates to all of us. The Bible reveals this aspect of God's nature in rich and varied use of family imagery. God isn't just Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He is "the" Father - *from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named* [**Ephesians 3:14, 15**]. When a man and a woman come together in marriage God extends to them this 'name'; a name that in essence belongs to Him – the name of *family*.

To build a strong and dynamic life that is effectual from generation to generation, you must focus on the family. Don't measure your success by what you do but rather by the soundness and wholeness of your family.

Barbara Bush said this, "*Your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the White House, but on what happens inside your house.*"

It's often the small and insignificant things that are the *big* things in family relationships. In order to take control of what happens inside your house you must learn to take control of those little things. In other words:

Stop doing things like	Start doing things like
Not really listening	Listening
Interrupting someone when they're talking	respecting each other's opinion

Being sarcastic or always being difficult	Appreciating and honouring others
Having always to be asked	Helping out

This may be simple but it's not simplistic. In family relationships, the little things you do show caring and commitment. And notice, none of these things are really too hard or impossible to do.

Family is priority, but what makes a happy, healthy, strong family? Extensive research shows that:

[1] Strong, loving relationships tend to create a strong family. This applies to the extended family also.

[2] Families are generally happy and successful to the degree that the family members:

Trust each other – Serve each other

Love each other – Play together

Believe in each other – Work together

Help each other – Worship together

Comfort each other – Pray together

Forgive each other – Celebrate together

Concerning **family**, the bottom line is this - there is simply no better, stronger, more deeply satisfying, richly rewarding, productive, and effective way of life (and living). And it's truly God's blueprint for living His way!

But remember, there is no such thing as a perfect family. Family is an ever moving, ever evolving institution. Yours may be a growing family; a learning family; a becoming family; or even a pioneering family. And whatever family you are will have impact on future generations. **Psalm 112:2, "His descendants will be mighty on earth, the generations of the upright will be blessed."** God wants you and your offspring to be mighty and blessed. There is no greater legacy you could pass on than to prepare your children to fulfil their own family roles with excellence and joy. This is what being "upright" is all about.

Research shows that children from strong, stable families are more likely to be successful in every way - *physically, mentally, spiritually, economically, and socially* - and that those with a strong extended family support system (like church) are better able to cope with the pressures of life.

As we look at today's disturbing family statistics, it's easy to get discouraged. Therefore, we should look to God to find the solutions. Every *living stone* in God's family has been individually chosen, separated, and made holy, so that He can be "Father." He considers each particular stone as being valuable and precious.

Too often people do not see themselves as valuable and precious in a family environment, or, as having something significant to contribute. And this is often caused by ignorance on the part of other family members. When we're faced with the impact of the realities that leadership is work, relationships take effort, and maintaining order is a significant task, it throws us off balance. Somehow this doesn't line up with the subconscious, unexamined expectation that somehow the huge benefits that come from a quality family life will simply be there for us with little or no real investment on our part. And because that expectation is not met, we begin to blame and accuse and punish those around us in little but hurtful ways.

The law of contribution must operate in every family. Every member must be consciously contributing to the welfare of the other members. Everyone must see both work and play as avenues of contribution. Aligning

with the principle of contribution also opens your eyes to ways in which you can contribute that will make a real difference. Whether you are a husband, wife, parent, grandparent, son, daughter, niece, nephew, uncle, aunt, or cousin, there are things you can do to make your family better. And this applies to church 'titles' also!

Keep this in mind if you can, "*Quality family life is never an accident; it is always an achievement.*" The *quality family* is as a direct result of proactive effort and conscious investment in the relationships that matter most. I strongly recommend that you capture your vision of the family member you want to be - in some way that is encouraging to you. I also suggest that you then be brutally honest with yourself concerning what kind of family member you *are*. And remember the need to be both real and realistic in your judgement.

The only way to get where you want to be is to start where you are. So recognise the reality. Only then can you effectively chart a course that will get you from one place the another. And as you move along be sure to review your vision. Much success in life comes as a result of this simple strategy. You raise your sights to a mark and keep moving toward it. Even if you never fully reach it, by simply moving toward it as effectively as you can, you will diminish the distance and make a tremendous difference in the quality of everything you do along the way. You will experience the God-kind of life.

The apostle Paul said this, "***One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus***" (Philippians 3:13-14). Fulfilling your vision for the family may take some time and some real effort on your part. But you are going to have to forget the past and do one thing at a time; taking one step at a time; and keeping the vision before you.

Here are three things you can do to help yourself:

[1] Create a family mission statement. One of the most effective family leadership activities is to create a sense of shared vision in the minds and hearts of all family members. And the best way to do this is to create your own family mission statement. When there is no shared vision, family members are more likely to go their own separate ways - operating out of their individual values and agendas. But with a shared vision the family is unified and the situation is quickly reversed.

OUR FAMILY MISSION (*example*)

To love each other...

To help each other...

To believe in each other...

To use our time, talents and resources to bless others...

To pray together...

To worship together...

No matter what!

[2] Create a regular "family time." Many major family-connected organisations today, from churches to government agencies, promote some kind of regular focused *family time*. People have begun to notice that when families don't spend quality time together on a consistent basis, things begin to go wrong and fall apart. Why not start with interaction around a family dinner - with no distractions.

Regular time should also involve “one-on-one” times with other family members. This may mean a short activity, such as going to eat, seeing a movie, going shopping or just hanging around. But it should always include ‘heart-to-heart’ chats. Chats basically involve interaction around two simple questions:

(a) What are you working on, or interested in at present?

(b) What can I do to help or encourage you?

[3] Create daily family worship time. Worshipping God together as a family will enrich the family by bringing unity in the spirit. And this is very powerful! Your worship time may include discussion and study around God’s word, or standing in agreement in prayer. If you and your family were to spend just ten minutes together each day - reading, talking or praising God - it will significantly impact on each of you. It will impact on the relationships between each member. It will impact on the way each member interacts with the other. It will impact on the way each member spends his / her individual time. It will help you to build your life God’s way.