

## LIFE MATTERS – What Matters Most – Family Part 4

1. 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.

In today’s Western society, creating time together as a family is a real challenge. There are so many distractions! Yet, it’s not that long ago, when having to make time to be together would have been considered ludicrous. But in this era, it takes a solid, proactive effort to gather the family in order to create even a little quality time together on a regular basis. There is great wisdom in making dinnertime a high family priority. It’s the natural time to talk and share, to provide emotional as well as physical nourishment for family members on a daily basis.

2. Create romance – date your mate. It’s been said that the most important thing you can do for your children is to love your spouse. That’s because the health of a marriage affects everything else in the family. And the example and testimony of the marriage affects marriages and families for generations to come.

In many people’s minds, dating before marriage was always a real occasion. However, dating each other after marriage is an absolute necessity. And when the pressures of life are overwhelming you it’s usually when you need it most! Remember, with the pace of life generally, if you really want it to happen it’s going to take a concerted effort. You will have to become very proactive and determined.

This wonderful renewing time together will significantly increase your sense of unity and shared purpose. And it will, make a significant difference to your ability to cope with family problems and give your children a healthy, happy anticipation of what a marriage relationship should be.

3. Create “one–on–one” times with parent and child. This may mean a short activity, such as going to eat, seeing a movie, going shopping or playing around. But it should always include parent chats. Parent chats basically involve interaction around two questions:

- (a) What are you working on, or interested in?
- (b) What can I do to help?

These questions accomplish some very important things. First, they imply that the child should be working on or be involved in something. And second, they define the role of the parent: *“I’m not your boss or dictator. I’m here to help.”*

6. 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 – 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.

7. Create clear stewardships – areas of responsibilities. Who pays the bills in the family? Who takes out the garbage? Who does the dishes, makes the financial decisions, prepares the meals, plans the vacations, washes the clothes, or attends parent–teacher meetings? If you don't talk these things over they can become a major source of discontent, smouldering resentment, or even conflict in the home. And try not to allow things to slip into traditional roles. Every family unit is unique because every family member is unique – with differing skills and abilities.

Clear stewardships are very important when working with children. Tasks provide the perfect opportunity for quality parenting. By empowering children to accomplish tasks, you can teach them to work and to love work. You can help them to develop skills and qualities of character that will benefit them in whatever they do throughout their lives. You can also solidify your relationship with them as you work side by side. You can help them learn to contribute to the family and prepare them to better contribute to society as a whole. All of this from little family chores!

So how do you do it? Here are some fundamental guidelines for you to follow:

- Invite your child to participate in decisions concerning what his/her chores or responsibilities will be. Involvement breeds commitment. A child is much more likely to stick with a task if it was his idea to take it on in the first place.
- Never take away the dignity of the responsibility by taking over and doing it yourself. Or by trying to get the child to do it your way exactly. Teach, train, help, love, encourage and correct where necessary... but don't take over!
- Make sure the child understands what you are expecting of him/her before you hold them accountable for the results. Don't assume the words "clean the living room" mean the same thing to your child as they do to you.
- Never "snoopervise." Avoid the temptation to sneak in and correct midstream. Give your child the freedom to succeed – or fail (and take the consequences). Only then will the victory truly be the child's.
- Give praise and celebrate the work done well – *together*. Encourage and express your joy in the child's ability to do a job well.
- Instead of focusing on "accomplishing tasks through people," focus on "building people through empowering them to accomplish tasks." This will have a huge impact on your long term results as a parent and as a leader.

Remember – your contribution to your family, and especially your children, will determine God's contribution to you.