

NEW YEARS/ FAMILY

Introduction..

We are celebrating the holidays this year without my Mom. First time in my life I have been through the holidays without parents. I have been thinking a lot about that this year....God placed me in a family...Their Family. Two of my children will with God's grace begin their families in a few weeks. I am in the middle of experiencing the cycle of Life.

I don't know why I was so blessed when others are not....I know that many have spent years asking God what He was thinking by putting them with parents that they believe failed them or abused them. One thing that we must realize when we embrace the Sovereignty of God is that He placed us in the family or lack thereof that He chose for us. In some way, the family you were placed in was necessary to carry out the desires of God.

I told my daughter who had some concerns about birthing her child that every person we have ever seen has been born. Sadly, I could now add that every person under 85 also had parents that chose not to abort them.

So as we turn to the New Year, family is key on my mind and in my prayers. Not just my biological family but also my spiritual family...each and every one of you.

I am blessed to have a relatively healthy family. For the most part, we all get along. We struggle like all families but being together we generally look forward to. But it wasn't until I had my own family that I realized that families who are healthy spiritually don't just happen.

Early on, I thought that some were just lucky...and some are...but for most of us, keeping families focused on Christ doesn't just happen. Spiritually leading your family is a full time job and it is the hardest and most rewarding thing that you can do.

God has always blessed us with an incredible church family. God provided mentors, resources, a desire to learn and a willingness to change. I had a lot to learn...

I learned that if we wanted our kids to follow Jesus and put Him first that we must be their example. I had to be taught to prioritize my relationship with Tammy ahead of my relationship with my kids. I had to learn how to communicate with my kids as their maturity changed.

We modeled for them genuine love for all people...particularly those others discarded. We prioritized church above all else. We filtered what they were exposed to...we set boundaries and had some pretty big border skirmishes. We sacrificed peace and calm for the harder work of discipline. We set our priorities together...Jesus first, our marriage second and children third. I didn't know this stuff...I had to be taught. I made a lot of mistakes...and learned to confess them to my kids and ask their forgiveness. I learned that kids were desperate for engaged parents rather than parents who want to their friend. When I came to Christ they were all under age 7. But I learned that it is never too late to start leading your family God's way.

Along the way, I learned that it takes a church family to raise your own family. Raising a family both at home and a church family doesn't just happen. It is one of the hardest and most important things that we can take to endeavor. I want to have and be part of an incredible family and church family. My guess is that I am not alone.

We are going to pause today and the beginning of 2025 and look at what God's word teaches us about developing Biblical Families. Families were God's idea...Jesus had one....Everyone was born into one.

I realize that we have many different circumstances in this room. For some the idea of family is a deep wound. Your family of origin may bring painful memories. You haven't felt loved, protected or nurtured. Perhaps the only family you have experienced is a church family. My guess is that the church at one point has or will let you down. I want to encourage you to not check out. I believe God will use this message to help you heal. Some of you are single. You naturally want to check out of these family sermons...Let me encourage you to stay engaged today. Because you will likely be engaged some day. You have a chance to start fresh from the beginning. The best time to put Christ at the center of your family is before you have one. In addition, you have a family and God may be using you to take what you learn today and change those you love...Some here are single or married with kids and in the thick of it...You may want to check out too.

All of us feel convicted when we compare our families to God's Book. I want to encourage you to let down your defenses the first hurdle is our pride. The second hurdle is feeling sorry for ourselves..The final hurdle is moving beyond excuses toward solutions...Take an honest assessment with humility....Understand God's love and grace.. We can all begin this year with a renewed focus on our family...We have an opportunity to honor God and change the lives of those we love.

Some here are in the Grand Parent stage. You may want to check out too. Kind of been there and done that...What is done is done....Please allow me to encourage you to inventory where you have been....Make sure you have dealt with any baggage....Look for ways to help those in the thick of it now I know some grandparents who have grand kids 1000's of miles away...They miss their grandkids...They adopted a family in their church- a young couple with three kids....A couple with no family support locally...Started by allowing the parents a date night each month...Those kids have pictures of this couple in their room....They have become advisors to that young couple....They are part of that family leaving a legacy for Christ...We are thus All in the Family

Today I want to share Six things that characterize Biblical families and Three things we can do to grow our families in Christ. And these things apply to your family at home and your church family. Our relationship with one another.

Let's open God's Word and see what He has to teach us about families.

1. Biblical Families Love Deeply.

Many here grew up in families where love is not expressed. I love you not said very often. Not really cuddled. No real hugs. Not a lot of appropriate affection Perhaps you struggle now to express love

Healthy Families express love naturally. "Just showing up" Kind of Love...Not based on performance...Expressed no matter what...Love you even if we disagree....Deep love celebrates you Deep love celebrates the uniqueness of everyone in the family

Sometimes we cookie cutter love ...We apply it to each kid the same...Sometimes I love in the way I was choosing but not in the way my kid was needing

Proverbs 10:12 (NIV84) 12 Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

You will not be a perfect parent, daughter, son, husband wife... Love brings in grace for our mistakes

Proverbs 16:6 (NIV84) 6 Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil.

Unfailing love is connected to grace...Love covers our mistakes....Mistakes are easier to overcome if bathed in love....So how are you doing in this area of Loving Deeply?

2. Biblical Families Forgive Unconditionally

Some grew up in family of grudeholders....Taught how to stay mad and get even....Learned to use mistakes of others as power...Win by never forgetting or forgiving

Some grew up in family of conditional forgiveness....When they apologize I will forgive....When they change I will forgive....When I get even I will forgive....When they have impressed me enough with changed behavior. When they deserve it I will forgive

How do you know if you have problems forgiving? If you bring up hurts from the past and act as if it happened yesterday...if you are bringing up things from years ago, you have not forgiven. If you bring up a mistake your spouse made early in your marriage, you have issues. If you want to know if you have forgiven, look at your arguments... If you are pulling things out of the past....Using them as ammo.... to prove how right you are...There is an element of unforgiveness in your heart

Proverbs 17:9 (NIV84) 9 He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

Love prospers when a fault is forgiven...Paul told the Corinthians....Love keeps no record of wrong. (1 cor 13). Not a record to pull out when you are losing an argument. Jesus said He who has been forgiven of much...loves much...Maybe there is an absence of love in your family Because you have yet to forgive and keep drinking the haterade. Maybe to have the love in your family that you desire....You are going to have to say "I forgive you" and mean it

Unconditional forgiveness...Even though you don't deserve it....You desperately need it....How are you doing in the area of Unconditional Forgiveness?

3. Biblical Families Create Traditions.

The entire Old Testament creates traditions Altars were not built for God but rather for us So that we could stop and remember the time that God intervened...God knows that we live fully when....We remember events...That deeply impacted us together

It is important that families take time to create traditions...You can't get time back....You can always have memories...But you never get time back....Families need stories to tell....Memories to be shared....They don't have to be big... just moments we did together

Your family's values are shaped more by your experiences you have shared than any words you have shared

So how are you doing creating memories and traditions?

4. Biblical Families Pursue Authenticity

Healthy family is not somewhere you go or somewhere that you are loved because you are perfect. Instead, it is a place where you are loved despite your imperfections....An environment where we may not always agree but we love you anyway... Safe place where we can admit our sins and failures...Without losing love. Biblical parents are the closest thing on earth that manifest unconditional love besides that of Jesus....Safe place where we can celebrate authentically

Proverbs 28:13 (NIV84) 13 He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Concealed sins Lose Mercy....The mercy that is promised in this passage is on the other side of confession. How can you know you are loved unconditionally if you address your sins conditionally? But when you and I are authentic...we know we are loved despite what we have done. If we candy coat what we have done then we don't know we are truly loved unconditionally. That part we hold back will haunt us. The grace that you desperately need is on the other side of authenticity... How fake are people in your family?...Is there a culture of authenticity? Authentic families consist of authentic family members.

5. Biblical Families Speak Truth in Love

Maybe you have been wounded in the past...Your family nailed down truth but not a lot of love in that truth... You are afraid that if you share truth you will not receive love....So you just fake it Some of you speak truth but you do so in Sarcasm, Anger, Manipulation, Resentment.....All kinds of boldness but very little love

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV84) 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Speaking truth in Love means....Speak without offending. Listen without defending...

As you and I share truth with others in love, transformation takes place in our hearts...We become different....Truth combined with love shape and mold us to be like Christ....How are you doing speaking truth in love?

6. Biblical Families give generously

My generosity is always tied to how grateful I feel toward God's Grace. The more I am aware of what I have received the more generous I become. Those who walk around in life feeling like we are owed something....Like we are entitled...Like God owes us something We are not generous people

Who is going to teach my kids to be generous? The school isn't. They are going to learn it from TV If our kids are going to grow up to be generous people, we have to model and teach it to them. As I have become a more generous person. My kids have become more generous

Proverbs 21:26 (NIV84) 26 All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing.

A family who gives generously lives with the priorities of God in mind....How are you doing in this area as a family?

We need to stay focused on the health and well being of our families and our church family. I am passionate about this because what we do in our families will impact generations for Christ. If you want to have great great grandchildren who are sold out for Christ....you must sell out now. If you want to leave a legacy in your family....start leaving it now.

In doing so. You become more like the person God intended for you to be....If your family is unhealthy you can't go home and keep doing what you are doing and expect things to get better You will just get better at hiding your unhealthy practices....You will get better at pretending like you are healthy...But you have an opportunity to change into the person God has called you to be....And in doing so, you can begin to shape your family's future. Where do we start?

Where do we start? Three Steps.

1. Be Intentional

You will not drift into health....Great marriages and families don't just happen....It is not a spiritual gift or blessing randomly bestowed....You have to be intentional about doing it God's way....and the blessings follow

The decisions that we make each day chose either health or disease for our family

Maybe being intentional means... Calling someone and telling them that you love them....Calling someone and telling them your were wrong...Asking for forgiveness... Forgiving someone else....Just changing your tone of voice....Just going and leaving your attitude at the door...Stop faking it and have some honest conversations

The quality and the foundation of you family will be determined by the choice you make intentionally not the ones that are made for you

2. Be Accountable

We have to be accountable...to God and to each other. Accountability is the pathway to humility

Humility is the currency of the spiritually health family

Many of us don't want to admit that our marriage or our family is not doing well....Because if you admit it you have to do something about it....You are just numb right now and you choose to stay numb and not feel anything....Some of you are estranged from your kids or parents for years and don't want help with it....You don't want to deal with these things. Hope they will go away....Many of us don't want to admit that our finances are totally out of control...We have to be accountable

3. Be Committed

Some of us are going to have to go back into a chapter of our lives...Things you thought you would never have to talk about....Things you thought would go away once you were married... Things you thought you could leave behind if you moved out....You may have to go back to that dark place and Let Jesus clean it out with you... It is hard but let me tell you it is so worth it

You realize it when you finally have what God wanted you to have...It is going to take work and tears...Counseling....Clean out the junk that we have hoarded that we never wanted to deal with Alcoholism, Drug abuse, Sexual Abuse, Sexual addictions, Greed and Materialism, Verbal abuse...physical abuse..

Before we can close a chapter and move on without the baggage holding us back.... What you will have on the other side of this difficult task....It will actually be real now... It is not theory, I have lived it.

You can have the family that you have always pretended to have

Am I committed to being the husband, father and person God called me to be? Here is why this is so important...Who you are at work....Who you are around your friends...Who you are at church....Who you are at home....Is the same person. As you make the commitment to love deeper in these areas of your life Our church is able to love deeper...As you extend grace our church can extend grace As you create traditions, the shared traditions of Remnant get raised....As you live generously. Remnant can better reflect the heart of Jesus Christ

I have heard people say, "I would give anything to have people in relationship with me"

That doesn't happen by accident. It happens as you and I become authentic followers of Christ...Everywhere and not just pretend while we are at church...So when people come here they see authentic followers of Jesus. Not perfect by any means.... But trying their hardest to be authentically committed

Imagine

Imagine this same room one year from now. Imagine what would happen if all of us applied these Biblical truths to our families....Our families at home...The family that is your discipleship group...The family that is our Church....The family that is our community....

If God allows and you are sitting in these chairs Jan 2026...What would you want your family to be like? Imagine your family improved in one of these areas...Loving More Deeply....Forgiving more Unconditionally.... Developing more Traditions and Memories...Living more Authentic Lives....Speaking more Truth with more Love....Giving more Generously...What would you give to see that happen? Would you give up your pride? Would you give up your right to be right? Humility is the currency of Biblical Families Change begins with a change in you and in me.

All of us have work to do in our families this year...We need each other to move forward....I want to encourage you. God wants to surround you with family....Embrace the family He gave youEmbrace a church family....your discipleship Group.....embrace God's wisdom shared through His word and the mentors in your life. Embrace family events and then do your part as the Holy Spirit leads. Be intentional, be accountable and be committed Let's Pray