

Introduction:

- In 1858 Abraham Lincoln began his most memorable speech with these words: "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Lincoln was addressing America. But I believe the same weakness, lack of unity, threatens to destroy many families today. But you can make a difference.
- If you want a strong family, one that can withstand all that threatens to tear it apart, work on developing and maturing your family. If the military can make soldiers out of common men in a few weeks, then parents should be able to grow/mature themselves and their families as well.
- Psalm 133:1 states: *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!* It actually ends stating: *there God commanded His blessing, life forever more.*
- This morning I want define what a family is. Give us a picture of God's design for family. And leave us with some tools to work with in building a family.
- *"So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.""* (Ephesians 5:33-6:3, NLT) In this passage we see a husband, wife, father, mother, children. All of these together form a family.

I. What Is A Family?

- A. The traditional family is under attack this is not anything new. It always has been under attack, just read Genesis. Ie. On TV, dads are made to look like fools, moms are made to look overbearing and kids are made to look like they are all wise.
- B. What we can say with confidence regarding a biblical picture of family, is this:
 1. God is the originator of family. It was His idea and design. Found in Genesis.
 2. God's ideal is for one man and one woman to be joined in a spiritually and physically commitment for a life, conceiving and raising children (Gen 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-25; 4:1-2.) God created Adam, Eve and they made Cain and Able. This is God's design for family.
 3. This is God's design. But God's designed has been marred by poor choices. Ie. Adam and Eve made a bad choice and it marred God's original design. But hear me: God has always made a way for man to get back to God's original design through Jesus.
 4. Maybe your parents are divorced, or maybe you only have a mom and no dad or a dad and no mom...or maybe you only know your grandparents as your mom and dad, sounds mixed up doesn't it? But God still makes a way for us to be in families!
- C. God's ideal picture of family is marred by:

1. Sin/poor choices/disobedience - have you ever done something wrong? sinned? Ie. Have you ever disobeyed your mom and dad and broke something they loved? Dads and moms do that too and sometimes it causes them to break God's design for family. That opens the door for a lot of sadness. But remember, God still makes a way for us to be in families!
 2. Ignorance - ignorance is when we do not know something.
 - a) sometimes - dads and moms do not have knowledge of God's design.
 - b) sometimes - dads and moms do not have knowledge of the tools needed to build God's design for marriage. Ie. Star War toy. (come in nice box, has instruction, but must be put together.)
 3. Barrenness - some married couples are unable to have children. And like a failed marriage these couples hearts break to at the inability to have children. It is not their fault. But it still hurts.
- D. A Christian family is a group of people who are related to each other through marriage, birth, or adoption and are committed to Jesus Christ. They faithfully express the love, power, and forgiveness of God to one another. So this leads us to the question: What are the ideals or characteristics of a strong family? Kids I want you to know these so you can help build them in your home and in your home when you get married.

II. What Are Characteristics Of A Strong Christian Family? God's design? Things we

- value. Ie. Jewels! (Flashlight) white gloves. Family Values! Things that are valuable.
- A. God is at the center of all they do. (Diamond.) Having a relationship with God is important. You talk about God...lots! Strong families are built on the strong foundation of GOD!
1. Prayer is a priority
 2. The Word of God is a priority
 3. Church is a priority - not consuming but serving.
 4. Godly character is a priority.
 5. Etc.
- B. Love abounds - unconditional (Red)
1. Affirmation - not what I do but who I am. "*Kind words are like honey- sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.*" (Proverbs 16:24, NLT) Strong families speak in positive and affirming ways and in doing so express love toward one another.
 2. Appreciation - for what I do. Gratitude.
 3. Communication of our love: Five Love Languages - Gary Chapman
 - a) acts of service
 - b) personal touch
 - c) words of affirmation

- d) gift giving
- e) quality time
- 4. Honor each others uniquenesses
- C. Learning - learning never stops. (Green)
 1. Values, skills, responsibilities. Responsibilities provide for learning both skill and values.
 2. Much of what is learned in the home is 'caught and not taught.' You learn by watching.
- D. Loyalty - devoted attachment. (Purple)
 1. Family sticks together. At the end of the day all we have is God and each other and we do not give that up.
 2. Ie. Nehemiah stationed families together along the wall as it was being rebuilt. Neh 4:13-14. Families will fight harder for each other and work faster to build the wall nearest them.
 3. Team - we work together, journey together, "together everyone accomplishes more." Family is a team.
- E. Leadership - Every family has to have a leader. (Blue)
 1. sets direction, vision. Ie. We are going to the grocery store. We are going to learn our family values.
 2. oversees building - makes sure it is happening and according to plan.
 3. administrates resources - time is our most precious resource
 4. takes responsibility - ultimately the leader is responsible.
- F. Laughter (pink)
 1. Prov 17:22 *Laughter is medicine to the bones.*
 2. *"A glad heart makes a happy face; a broken heart crushes the spirit."* (Proverbs 15:13, NLT)
 3. Enjoy time together. The leader is responsible for this.
- G. Forgiveness - we do not hold/keep offense. Mt 18. Parable of unforgiving servant. (Green emerald)

III. What Tools Build A Strong Family?

- A. Confident leader - we value leadership but the leader is a tool in the hand of God. Dad, mom if single parent, grand parent, all are leaders.
 1. Leaders get us ready. They help us prepare.
 2. Leaders help us with timing. When to do something. Ie. Put away your toys. Brush your teeth. Put on your pajamas. In bed!
 3. If families have leaders then they also have to have followers. That is you!
- B. Communication - we value communication (love), but it is also an important tool for strong family and for life.

1. Leader - establish ground rules on how they will communicate. We speak calmly, don't interrupt, everyone gets a chance to speak.
 2. Message sent - message received - message responded to.
 3. Until we hear each other we cannot have strong relationships.
- C. Conflict resolution
1. All families have conflicts.
 2. Don't fight to hurt one another.
 3. Work to find a solution to the problem.
- D. Crisis and stress management
1. All families experience stress.
 2. Recognize when you or another is under stress.
 3. Take it to God, in prayer and go to the Word.
 4. Let others who are close to you help you in on your stress. Ask for help.
 5. Examine your load and prioritize.
 6. Be mindful of how others feel and react under stress. How family members relate to one another in difficult situations show characteristics of trust, beliefs, and love for one another.
- E. Clearly defined roles. Roles determine how we 'fit or work together.'
1. Dad, Mom, inside house, outside house, I cook ,you clean. I wash, you dry.
 2. You make the mess you clean up the mess.
 3. Roles define responsibilities and who is responsible for it getting done.
- F. A practice of setting goals: le. potty training, passing a test, riding a bike, being Christ like. Goal mean we are not there yet but that is where we are going. le. Tape measure. Measures progress.

Conclusion:

- Great families are built. They do not just happen.
- But we want to build according to God's design.
- We want to use the tools he has given to us.