

CGYG-LIFE Marriage-Family Life group
Session 1: Foundations of a strong family (November 6, 2010)

- strong home/family life is founded on Christ-centered lives of the husband & wife (father & mother)
 - while many Christian couples profess when they get married that Christ will be the centre of their relationship, marriage and child-raising seem to be times when many Christians actually stagnate or backslide in their walk with Christ → crowded out by competing interests/demands, some of which may be legitimate (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32-35)
 - requires even more intentionality to continue growing in walk with Christ after marriage, and especially if/when kids come – this doesn't happen 'by chance', but requires intentional effort
 - the "default pathway" in our fallen state is never towards godliness but away from God, even as a single → multiplied in marriage and even more with kids due to increased competing demands

Deuteronomy 6:1-15

Some thoughts on this passage (from C. Swindoll):

1. v.4: **Hear** the truth of God and affirm His lordship in your life (and household) on a continuing basis.
 - the Lord is the One and only God – He has the right to rule over us; He is the sovereign over all things
2. v.5-6: **Love** the Lord passionately with your whole being
 - with a total, complete, all-encompassing kind of love → with total devotion to Him
3. v.7-9: **Teach** the children in the ways of the Lord diligently
 - deliberate teaching – can be both formal and informal (i.e. while walking, sitting, lying down, etc.)
 - consistently talking of spiritual things as part of regular conversation in the household
 - "The teaching weaves very naturally and comfortably into the fabric of everyday life."
4. v.10-15: **Fear** the Lord greatly in all aspects of your life
 - remember that God is the Almighty and Holy God → we must approach Him reverently and obediently
 - do not forget Him when you prosper
 - beware of "many gods" all around (e.g. in our day, materialism, health & well-being, money, fame, etc.)
 - these must not compete with the Lord in our hearts

In summary, a Christ-centered life → a Christ-centered home

Some additional thoughts:

- keeping Christ central in the family/home starts at the level of the individual believer (i.e. with your own life)
 - you can only lead where you yourself have been and/or are going; you cannot impart on your spouse or children what you yourself do not have
 - godliness needs to begin with **you** (not your spouse, or your kids)
 - we are each accountable to God **individually** for the way that we have followed Him and what we've done with our lives (2 Cor. 5:9-10)
 - husbands do have a responsibility to feed and care for their wives spiritually, and to help their wives be sanctified (Eph. 5:25-32) (and will give account to God for how they have done that), but that does not absolve wives of their personal responsibility in these areas
 - e.g. Proverbs gives many examples of wise/noble vs. foolish/ignoble wives, in which they themselves are held responsible (e.g. Proverbs 12:4; 14:1; 21:9, 19; 27:15-16; 31:10-31)
 - we need to be careful to continue growing in our walk with the Lord individually – involves both the overall mindset that guides us, as well as intentional effort in the details of each day
- a husband & wife who are both seeking after the Lord can also help each other grow in Christ
 - form an effective partnership that can help them go farther than either could alone (Eccl. 4:9)
 - can help & encourage each other when one or both are feeling weak/cold (Eccl. 4:10-11)
 - can defend each other from attack (e.g. through prayer, mutual encouragement) (Eccl. 4:12a)
 - if the kids are also walking with the Lord, the family is even stronger (Eccl. 4:12b)

-again, requires intentional effort – to really know and understand one another and to be able to communicate effectively with one another; to pray for one another; to encourage and teach one another; to rebuke and correct (!) one another in love (this really requires both husband and wife to be showing the fruit of the Spirit in their lives!)

-especially when children come, the entire pattern of your life together as a family needs to show that Christ is the centre of your lives and of your home (not you and/or your kids)

-this needs to govern how you spend your time, money, energy, etc. as a family

-“actions speak louder than words” – you may tell your kids that God is important, but be sure that the way you live doesn’t send a different message – e.g. telling them that church is important, but skipping church so they can play in a sports league

-intentional ordering and orienting of one’s family life towards Christ

-intentional ordering of the home and daily activities to facilitate opportunities for both parents and children to learn about the Lord and to encourage obedience to His Word (Deut. 6:5-9)

-intentional teaching and training of children to know and obey the Lord (Eph. 6:4) – includes not just formal teaching, but also deliberate conversations throughout the daily routines of life together (Deut. 6:5-9)

-intentional correction and discipline of children so they will know right from wrong (e.g. Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:12-14; 29:15)

-intentionality required to avoid both being too lax and being too harsh

-Growing a godly marriage/family requires deliberate effort, first to build godliness in your own life, then in the lives of your spouse & children. A “laissez faire” or “go with the flow” attitude towards one’s own spiritual life and the spiritual growth of one’s spouse/family is the attitude of a sluggard (e.g. Proverbs 24:30-34), not of the wise

Some practical considerations

-The demands that come with marriage & children necessitate intentional ordering of your life and priorities to facilitate your growth and your family’s growth in Christ. With this in mind,

-make & guard time to spend with the Lord daily – this has to be a non-negotiable

-may mean having to reduce ‘clutter’ in your life (e.g. watch less TV)

-intentional ordering of your days to go to bed earlier, so you can wake up earlier for quiet time

-evaluate and re-evaluate priorities with changing stages of life – e.g. hobbies, personal interests may need more and more to be laid aside, especially when kids come, so you can have time with the Lord and continue to serve Him (and have the energy for it!)

-maintain open lines of communication (spend time regularly talking with your spouse & kids!) and be aware of and deliberate about ways you can support and encourage each other; pray for each other

-especially when you have kids, deliberately order your days/weeks so they can be productive and provide opportunities to instruct and train them in the ways of the Lord; the Lord may choose to alter your plans (which is fine), but without a plan, you are likely to waste much time and many opportunities.

-for example, schedule your days so that you can share family meal(s) together and have time for family devotions (sometimes easier said than done – but it needs to be done!)

-evaluate the activities that you and/or your children are involved in from the perspective of their eternal value, not just their value in this world. Avoid overloading your kids with activities that just end up draining time and energy from more important things.

-set boundaries for your kids early in life, not just with respect to appropriate behavior, but also in terms of choices they are allowed to make (and expand the boundaries as they grow and mature). Establish rules and be intentional and consistent in correction and discipline

-children need to know that they are not the centre of the universe

-be consistent in the application of correction & discipline; have rules with consequences for disobedience, and ensure both parents stick with them (e.g. spanking for willful disobedience)