

Saving What's Left

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There is no denying that the family has suffered much in recent decades. Several generations have now been raised believing the notion that divorce, infidelity, instability, fighting, and live-in partners are inevitable in every family. Perhaps the words of Jesus make a lot of sense when we survey the broken pieces left behind in the wake of such upheaval: *“Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die”* (Revelation 3:2). The reality is that we cannot simply go back and undo many of the mistakes we have already made, even in our own families. So rather than dwelling on the past, it is best to move forward and look for positive solutions. We must save what is left and help those who have been broken by family strife. Sadly, too many Christians find this subject uncomfortable and inconvenient, and make “church” a place where broken families do not feel welcome or receive the spiritual guidance they need.

- Those who grew up in broken families should seek to break the cycle. No amount of frustration can change one's past, but we all have control of how we treat our own children.
- Those who have been divorced do not need shunning or mistreatment, but love and care, as well as a social support network that helps them cope with their situation.
- Marriages that are on the edge need drastic help. We cannot “baby-step” our way back from the edge of divorce.
- Children that are marginalized must be given opportunities to receive praise and develop their skills.
- Similarly, make a conscious effort to repair relationships with children before it is too late (when minds and hearts have been closed to reconciliation).
- No family is perfect, but it is important for us to strive for it. After all, if we do not set our aim high, we may always be disappointed with where the arrow lands.

It Is God's Design For Families To Be Happy

Husbands are to enjoy their wives (Proverbs 5:18, 12:4, 18:22, Ecclesiastes 9:9) and parents are to be happy with their children (Psalm 127:3-5, 128:3). What a foreign thing it must be for people today to hear that families can and should be happy together. Perhaps we are just bombarded with so many images and examples of misery in the home that we have forgotten what it is like to work, play, and worship in harmony. Why does the home need to be a war-zone between teenagers and their parents? Why do our families need to treat each other like rivals? Why do our relationships need to play out like a soap opera? Jesus strengthened the family through His example:

- Some of His miracles dealt with family sorrow (Matthew 8:1-13, 9:18-26);
- He valued children (Luke 18:15-17, Matthew 18:1-5);
- He reinforced the command to honor parents (Mark 7:9-13);
- He encouraged fidelity in marriage (Matthew 5:27-28) and discouraged divorce (Matthew 19:1-9).

More important than anything else, Jesus taught about family priorities. It is not a stretch to say that family harmony is found first in the way we serve God. Jesus made it clear, even by His own example (John 7:1-9), that physical family is not the most important thing. It is secondary to God (Matthew 10:34-37) and obedience to Him (Luke 11:27-28). Families are happiest when they put aside their own desires and distractions and unify for a purpose greater than themselves. Maybe that sounds a little *Swiss Family Robinson*, but it has always been human nature to accomplish our greatest feats when we coalesce for a higher purpose.