

Saving What's Left (2)

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How Do We Strengthen Our Families?

Work Together – I am reminded of a passage in Nehemiah 3:12, in which Shallum and his daughters work together on a portion of the wall in Jerusalem. Our families could really use a dose of work these days. Maybe we have become so disillusioned with “family” because it is nothing more than a group of people who share a house and little else. It is time for our families to start practicing charity, working in the community, doing yard work, teaching Bible classes – together!

Come To Christ Together – While every person must individually come to God in his or her own time, it is lamentable that family unity has been so lost that we very infrequently hear of entire families being converted, like the families of Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailor, or Crispus (Acts 11:14, 16:15, 18:8, 1 Corinthians 16:15). Too often we take for granted that our children will be saved eventually, but then fail to really act on it.

Worship Together – I know how difficult it is to face a hundred different activities in a family. It becomes very easy to give up on unity and just let every member go his or her own way. Interestingly, though, growing up, my family made it a point to make worship the time that we drop everything else and do something together. Regardless of how many practices, concerts, homework assignments, or chores were on our “to-do” list, everything was put aside for worship. We drove to church in the same vehicle, sat on the same row, and ate Sunday lunch together. Consider the way that worship is viewed in Deuteronomy 16:11, *“And you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God, you, and your son, and your daughter.”*

Read and Study Together – This is one of those suggestions that is easy to say and hard to do. Many families can only imagine what it must be like to share the Word of God at home (as if the Bible is a “church only” thing). How often do you pull the Bible from the book shelf (or the back seat of the car) and spend time reading as a family. Many Old Testament stories are exciting and fun to read to younger children, and many of the epistles in the New Testament make thought-provoking reading for our older children. Abraham made it a point to teach his own children the ways of God (Genesis 18:19). Also consider the imperative in Ephesians 6:4, *“Bring up a child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”* Is this to be done at the church building only?

Examine Together – Self-examination is necessary for growth (2 Corinthians 13:5), and it is often when we examine each other that we are most efficient about it. *“Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”* (Proverbs 27:17). A

good question to ask of your family today is this: *“Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?”* (2 Kings 4:26).

Be Loyal Together – We live in a society of consumerism where everybody asks, “What’s in it for me?” Unfortunately, families (or churches, or societies for that matter) can never be harmonious as long this attitude exists. Sometimes what is best for the family is not what is best (immediately) for me. Many family members will abandon their relatives if they believe their needs are not being met. What our society is faced with is husbands who convince themselves that their sexual desires justify their lack of commitment or abandonment, wives who believe they deserve money and a career at the expense of their families, and children who always believe the grass is greener on the other side or that their parents are oppressing them. When selfish desires are allowed to run wild, our families disintegrate. Though Paul is speaking of churches in Galatians 5:15, the sentiment is poignant; *“If you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by each other.”*