

Sunday, June 19, 2011—Strong Families Build Strong Churches

Being a Grace Mom

- I Thessalonians 2:7—when Paul describes how he conducted his ministry among the Thessalonians he uses the imagery of a nurse cherishing her children.
- According to *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*, the word “cherish” carries the following meanings:
 - To treat with tenderness and affection; to give warmth, ease or comfort to.
 - We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. 1 Thess. 2.
 - The damsel was fair and cherished the king. 1 Kings 1.
 - To hold as dear; to embrace with affection; to foster, and encourage; as, to cherish the principles of virtue; to cherish religion in the heart.
 - To treat in a manner to encourage growth, by protection, aid, attendance, or supplying nourishment; as, to cherish tender plants.
 - To harbor; to indulge and encourage in the mind; as, to cherish ill will, or any evil passion.
- Ephesians 5:29—the Greek word translated “cherisheth” occurs only one other time in the New Testament and is used in reference to the type of care the husband is to have for wife. Likewise, mothers are instructed to cherish their children.
- Titus 2:3-4—one of the things the aged women should be teaching the younger women is how to “love their children.” This does not come naturally for all mothers hence Paul gives specific instructions. The aged women are to teach this skill and behavior and the younger women are to practice it in the home.
- The Greek word translated “to love their children,” literally means “loving one’s offspring or children,” according to *Strong’s Concordance*.
- I Thessalonians 2:8—a grace mothers primary job to love and cherish her children to the point that her own soul is imparted unto them.

Being a Grace Dad

- I Thessalonians 2:11—there are three things a father needs to do for his children: exhort, comfort, and charge.
- *Exhort*—means to encourage, to embolden, to cheer, to advise. The primary sense seems to be to excite or to give strength, spirit or courage.

- To incite by words or advice; to animate or urge by arguments to a good deed or to any laudable conduct or course of action.
 - Young men also exhort to be sober minded.
 - To advise; to warn; to caution.
 - To incite or stimulate to exertion. (*Webster's 1828*)
- One of a father's primary jobs it to exhort, comfort, and encourage his children.
 - Acts 14:22—exhorting
 - Acts 16:40—comforted
 - Romans 12:1—beseech
 - II Corinthians 1:4-8—comforteth, comfort, comforted, beseech
 - *Comfort*—means to strengthen; to invigorate; to cheer or enliven, 2) to strengthen the mind when depressed or enfeebled; to console; to give new vigor to the spirits; to cheer, or relieve from depression, or trouble. (*Webster's 1828*)
 - *Charge*—carries the following meanings: To lay on, give or communicate, as an order, command or earnest request; to enjoin; to exhort. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded (1 Tim. 6:17). 3) To give directions to; to instruct authoritatively. (*Webster's 1828*)
 - I Thessalonians 2:12—Paul was not merely suggesting to the Thessalonians that they walk worthy of God he was instructing them in what was appropriate conduct for believers.
 - One of the primary responsibilities of a father is to charge and instruct his children. In my view it is the Biblical pattern for the father to be the primary disciplinarian of the children.
 - Colossians 3:21—the Greek word translated discouraged means: to be disheartened, dispirited, broken in spirit, according to *Strong Concordance*. Father's should not discipline in a manner or to an extent that we break deprive our children of confidence or break their spirits.
 - Ephesians 6:4—fathers are to bring, or lead their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In other words, the children are following or being lead by their father as he walks in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is not something the father orders the children to do, rather, the father leads by example.
 - *Nurture*—is that which promotes growth, education, and instruction.
 - II Timothy 3:16—instruction
 - *Admonition*—is “gentle reproof; counseling against a fault; instruction in duties; caution; direction.” (*Webster's 1828*)
 - I Corinthians 10:11

- The entire family is to grow up in Christ Jesus together. The father is to lead the process along.

Being Filled With the Spirit

- Ephesians 5:18—we need to allow the Holy Spirit that we have been given to be the operative force in our lives.
 - Verse 19—worship to God.
 - Verse 20—thankfulness.
 - Verse 21—submission in the fear of God.
 - Verses 22-24—wives to husbands.
 - Verses 25-29—husbands to Christ.
 - Chapter 6 Verses 1-2—children to parents.
 - Chapter 6 Verses 5-7—servants to masters.
- Colossians 3:16—letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly produces the same results as being filled with the Spirit.
 - Verse 16—worship to God.
 - Verse 17—thankfulness.
 - Verse 18—wives to husbands.
 - Verse 19—husbands to wives.
 - Verse 20—children to parents.
 - Verse 22—servants to masters.
- I Timothy 3:4-5—one cannot serve in church leadership if his own house is not in order. This is because the family is the crucible of Grace where we learn to practice what we preach.
- I Corinthians 12:25-26—one of the biggest causes of schisms in the local church is dysfunctional families. A strong local church is comprised of a collection of strong families. The reverse is also true.
- Ephesians 2:21-22

The Four Freedoms of Grace

- Grace can't be some abstract concept that you talk about in your home. It has to be a real-time action that ultimately imprints itself on your children's hearts. To talk about grace, sing about grace, and have our children memorize verses about grace—but not give them specific gifts of grace—is to undermine God's work of grace in their hearts.
- *The Freedom to be Different*—religious legalism tries to press everyone into the same mold. Grace accepts people where they are and conforms them to the image of Christ despite their unique tastes and differences.

- *The Freedom to be Vulnerable*—one of the great things about grace is the safe haven it offers to a transparent heart. God’s grace accepts people when it catches them without their makeup. We need to treat the members of our family the way God treats us.
- *The Freedom to be Candid*—candor isn’t about catching people off guard to make them look worse than they are. Candor is several steps above honesty and is a way of communicating freely without prejudice or malice. Candor takes the truth and frames it in a way that helps rather than harms. The most important nuance of candor is that it is supposed to be free of deception. In grace-based homes families can respectfully dialogue without fear of payback.
- *The Freedom to Make Mistakes*—grace provides equilibrium for a family. Where too many parents are concerned with how others view their family, grace-based parents are more excited with how God views their family. Grace-based parenting is not a checklist for parenting; it’s a lifestyle. Grace demands that we actually walk by faith. Grace-based families don’t bother erecting fences around their families because they know full well that sin is already present and accounted for inside their family. The grace-based home assumes its members will struggle with sin and helps them how learn how to walk in the spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Grace-based families understand that the only real solution for sin is the work of Christ on their behalf. There is nothing any of us can do on our own to gain more of God’s love.
 - *Response vs. Reaction*—a grace response to sin in our families is to avoid condemnation. We need to evaluate wrong action, discuss their negative effects, and even voice our pain and disappointment. Condemnation attacks someone’s character rather than addressing their behavior.
 - Romans 5:1
 - Romans 8:1
 - *Consequences*—one of the most ungraceful things you can do is to circumvent the consequences of your children’s sin. Children learn from discipline and have an internal sense of justice that needs to know they have paid their debt for their infraction and can move on with their lives. When you either let your children get away with their sin or promise them consequences but fail to deliver, you upset the scales of justice that tip within their souls.
 - Don’t give up on them.
 - Don’t accommodate or bankroll their rebellion.
 - Be prepared to forgive them regardless of what they have done.
 - Resist the urge to replay and repay the hurt they’ve put you through.
- Ephesians 4:32—we need to learn how to apply grace forgive past wrongs and move on.