

Christ's Love, Our Calling

LOVE TAKES TIME with FAMILY



A Time to Reflect

God placed us into families. The relationships in families are foundational to God's loving care for us and impact our understanding of him. Unfortunately we experience too many broken or damaged family relationships today. The family landscape often looks like a field of dented up, rusted out cars with missing parts rather than what was intended: a showroom of God's love.

Fatigue and time pressure are two factors that often affect families. More than previous generations, men and women today find themselves caught in the tension between job, family, church, school, and entertainment/hobbies/leisure time.

- *Sort out the different influences that drive people to such a hectic pace in our world today. What causes us to fill the time the way we do?*
- *Describe some of the collateral damage on family relationships (spouses, parents, children).*

Stewardship is investing ourselves in caring for the gifts God has entrusted to us for his purposes. Near the top of that list is the gift of family (just under the supreme importance of our relationship with God). Time is the framework in which we carry out our different callings in family life. Being faithful stewards requires examining our lives and determining how to best invest ourselves into our family in a way that pleases God. It is TIME to be serious about family – as spouses, parents, and children – and begin with our own families to reverse a negative societal trend.

A Time to Review

If you look at the laws and guidance God gave Moses for the Old Testament believers, you will gain insights into God's care for family. Notice these two messages for his people.

Deuteronomy 24:5 *⁵If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.*

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 *⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*



- *Explain what you think this reveals about God's perspective on the value of TIME for family.*

The Bible has a lot to say about family. Love is a key component and love takes time. Many aspects of the biblical definitions are related to time such as *Love is patient, love is kind...It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres* (1 Corinthians 13:4,7).

- *Look at the categories below that correspond with your calling in the family at this time. List specific ways your use of TIME can help represent Christ's love in your family:*

Husbands

Ephesians 5:25 ²⁵*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...*

Wives

Titus 2:3-5 ³*Likewise...⁴train the younger women to love their husbands and children...*

Parents

Ephesians 6:4 ⁴*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

Young children

Ephesians 6:1-3 ¹*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right...*

Grown children

1 Timothy 5:4 ⁴*But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.*

Life isn't about me. It is about Christ's love for me and his way of sharing his love with my family through me. Lack of joy in life often comes when we are blind to our calling in family (God's design for my relationships at this moment), fail to appreciate its valuable effect on others, or are jealous for our own needs.

A Time to Repent

Family is a place where love is most tested and nurtured. But we often fail to live up to the picture God paints for our relationships within the family. The family is not whatever people decide it is. It's not one among many "alternate lifestyles." It is God's own creation; the way things were meant to be to enjoy the blessings he designed. Yet many families may be casualties in Satan's war on the institution of marriage or parenting. God is serious about the energy we put into family and the nurturing of love and skills for life that are to be found there.

God is serious about family. It is one of his ways of caring for his world and reflects our relationship with him.

1 Timothy 5:8 ⁸*If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*



- *Categorize and explain the different ways in which a person might be failing in his use of time to “provide for his relatives, especially his immediate family.”*

There are many ways we let TIME for family slip away: when we barely have time to say “good morning” or “good night;” when watching television causes us to ignore family needs; when work or our preoccupation with hobbies pre-empts planned time with spouse or children; or when our sinful emotions have turned family time into harmful time together.

- *Identify ways your use of TIME has let down those in your family by not providing what was needed for their emotional, spiritual, or physical needs.*

Spend time in quiet prayer right now confessing any family neglect. Ask for forgiveness and a new spirit from the one who washes away our sin. (At home Psalm 51 may be a good confession prayer starter for you).

Remembering ways we have failed in our use of time for family can end up burdening instead of providing release. It can leave us with a feeling of guilt instead a freshness of sins forgiven. Be sure to keep your eyes on Christ's love. Don't live in regret, but rather ask God to turn it into good and set you in a new direction. It's never too late to reorder your time to impact the family relationships God has entrusted to you – to move from apathy or guilt to commitment.

A Time to Renew

The stresses of time will continue to face families. Employers want us to make time sacrifices for the job over everything else. Being a parent involves a demand for time to change diapers, stop fights, dry tears, feed faces, and shuttle children to lessons, practices, games, and parties. Plus where is time for the spouse or aging parents or... ? Sometimes we think we are living a committed life and other times we feel we should be committed (to some institution). History shows how easy it is to slide into the pattern of the worldly culture around us. Now is the time for us to heed Joshua's challenge to put the Lord at the center of our families

Joshua 24:15 ¹⁵But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

- *Discuss how you can make this as a your personal commitment.*
- *Formulate a way that you as a church can help make family commitment to the Lord a priority.*

Acts 16:14-15 ¹⁴One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's



message. ¹⁵When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

- Determine what you can learn from the example of Lydia.

God defines his relationship to us in terms of family – his protection and provision like a Father lavishing his love on his children. He compares his caring ways to those of a mother. Christ views us as his bride and he the bridegroom who longs to be with us. His relationship with us defines love, for He IS Love. That is why family time with God is so important – to know the one who makes us family and shows us real love. Love means we sacrifice our preferences, comfort, goals, security, money, energy, time for others... We view them as Christ does – from a heavenly perspective to carry out God's caring plans in life through our calling – the dynamic design God has for our lives.

A Time to Re-commit

Recapturing time with family

At their deathbeds few (if any) have regretted not spending more time with work. Many, however, regret not spending time with family. Take time for what matters most.

Let love for family come first in priority above tasks (people over things). Things of this world will pass away. That doesn't mean we neglect or despise them but look at how beneficial they might be for the relationships in family (e.g. fixing your spouse's car as part of insuring her well-being and showing her you love her.) Hugs, attention, listening, planning special events, kindnesses, time for spiritual nourishment may be elements that need your time. Make certain things "non-negotiable" (prayer time at bed time, devotion time, date nights) – or other things will fill those spaces.

If you can stop your life and reorder it to include more time for family, what would it look like? What is most important for your family? Where do those in your family need your time most right now?

Discuss together how you can encourage each other for family time (ideas, support...)

- Time with spouse (meals with just the two of you, trips, sports, shopping, talking, making love)
- Family time together with God as core to your relationships (family devotions, quiet personal devotions, church)
- Time with kids used to build the relationship (taking to school, helping with homework, supervising chores, playing, talking, attending activities)
- Time with whole family (meals, travel, vacations)
- Family maintenance to support and enrich the relationships (laundry, dishes, house cleaning, yard work, paying bills, repairing house, maintaining car)

If available, fill out a chart for yourself similar to [pages ___](#) in the *Love Takes Time* booklet

Prayer

