

10.15am and 5pm

Date: 10 June 2007
Services: 10.15am and 5pm *only*
Series: Its all about relationship
Passage: Prov 1:22, Eph 6:4 and others
Title: Home and family

- It's the most natural thing in the world – to want to give your children the best.
- We want them to have health, happiness, good education, good job, security...
- As they grow, we try to give them exposure to different opportunities – be they sporting, or dance, or drama, or music, or craft or chess...
- And to be avid readers which will expand their view of the world...
- take them overseas trips if possible – again to expand their view of the world...
- And we've helped them with their homework or even done their homework...
- And in more recent years, we've helped them in to computers, and iPods and mobile phones...
- ...and in to the right clothes...
- And depending on where your kids are up to – even in to cars...
- And perhaps we're paying their uni fees so they'll have no HECS debt... ///
- And so our kids have every opportunity... we've given them everything they could possibly want or need and more!...
- And perhaps – there is nothing wrong with any of that!
- Perhaps... though it is a very western understanding of raising children isn't it!!....!
- our culture often holds up the family as being what life is all about... almost to the point of worshipping family at times... idolising family... idolising children...
- ... but there is a weird mix in here as well.... Because there is another side which almost despises kids... high abortion rates, low birth rates, some choosing to remain childless... OR when they do have kids, outsourcing care with full time care from a very early age... //
- Meantime families are under stress. Family life is at break point for many.
- And every now and again, we stop to ask a few questions...
- Like – how come we're so busy?
- How come our home life is so full of stress?
- How come we don't have any time together?
- How come we don't talk any more?
- Or in the words of the Herald article headline from last Saturday... **WE'VE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD, SO WHY ARE WE STILL UNHAPPY?**
- Or quoting that eminent guest columnist in the Herald Paul Shepanski last Tuesday: *It*

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would seem that many Australians are looking for something more. Recognising the sharp juxtaposition of our ever-expanding wealth and the growing fragility of relationships at home and in the broader community, voters are signalling that it's time for a vision that stretches beyond fiscal issues.

- Paul quoted the English opposition leader on the issue: *It's time we admitted that there's more to life than money, and it's time we focused not just on GDP, but on GWB - general wellbeing,*" he said. *"Wellbeing can't be measured by money or traded in markets. It's about the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our culture and, above all, the strength of our relationships."*
- Does that resonate with you? //
- You'd think Christians should know better wouldn't you... we who are so fortunate to be in relationship with God – we who have some handle – some perspective on the world... some understanding of our meaning and purpose?
- Shouldn't relationships in home and family take pre-eminence? //
- Of course they should – without question...
- But **are** they?
- Brothers and sisters – when it comes to home and family life – it's all about **relationship!**
- And as a church family, we need to make sure that we work against the pattern of the western world; the culture of which we are a part, and that we are working actively against the trend to ensure that **relationship** is at the centre of home and family.
- How?
- First, make sure your relationship with God is rich and real.
- We're called on to have no other gods before God: nothing more important, no-one with a higher call for our attention than God.
- Is that true of you? Nothing is a higher priority for you...? No other master you serve than the God of all the ages? ///
- And no one with a higher call for our affection!
- For we are called on to love him with all our heart and soul and strength and mind – in other words – with everything we have and are.
- He is to have the first call on our affection, our devotion, our adoration.
- And there is so much that falls into place when this is the case!
- Like exercise... you know how when you exercise, it has untold impact on so many areas of life – your weight, your general health, the way you feel... and because of that, on in to your relationships etc...
- How much more so – when you get your act together with God?
- Every single area of your life will be touched!
- Because the Lord will be challenging you and shaping you and speaking to you – and his Holy Spirit changing you.

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- Get **this** right... and I almost don't need to bother with the rest of the sermon! //
- So can I ask you – does he have the first call on your **attention** and **affection**?
- Are you **reading** the **Bible** and **meditating** on it, are you **praying**, are you **regular** here in the company of God's people as we are **commanded**, are you part of a **small group**...?
- Three weeks ago I said - *is this relationship, your most precious, most special, most treasured relationship?*
- *Are you seeking to grow in this relationship? Are you nurturing this relationship?*
- *Are you revelling in it, enjoying it, loving it?*
- *is it your passion and joy and delight?*
- Friends – just see what happens when you make this happen!
- Now remember what we are asking – how can make sure that home and family life is all about relationship?
- And this next section – will be more pertinent to those who have children still at home – any where under 20 say... so for those who aren't parents, or those who don't have children at home any more – don't switch off – but as you hear what God's word says to those who do – please pray for us in this situation – that the Lord will help us to put into practice what we read in his word...
- After making sure **your** relationship is on track... I want to urge you to make sure you are nurturing and encouraging your children's relationship with God.
- But I want to ask you a question...
- Are you raising your children as Christians, or are you hoping and praying that one day they'll become Christians?
- I think this is such an important first question to ask.
- Because the children of believers, are not only special to God, they belong to him and his promises extend to them.
- So Jesus took children in his arms and blessed them saying the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.
- And in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter proclaimed that the promises of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit were for us and for our children....
- And in 1 Corinthians 7, the Apostle Paul stated that even the children from a family where one partner is not a believer are still 'holy'. //
- I.e. your children, as part of your family, are part of God's family.
- That is why we baptise babies... just as under the Old Covenant, all males were circumcised.
- Baptism doesn't **make** them Christian, but it takes seriously God's promises to them that they are **his**.
- So we **nurture** them in that **relationship**.

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- Just as we nurture their relationship with say their **grandfather**, so we nurture their relationship with their **Heavenly Father**.
- We're talking about **relationship** you see.
- And if **you're** in relationship with God, then from the beginning, so are **they**.
- And if they make a '**decision**' as such – it won't be a decision to **become** a Christian, it may be – sadly – **devastatingly** – a decision to walk **apart** – for a **time at least**.
- Take God at his **word**, and **raise** them in the relationship.... He's **known** them – had his hand upon them since they were being nit together in their mother's **wombs** for goodness sake!
- So – we *train up a child in the way he should go*, and claim the promise that *when he his old, he will not depart from it* (Proverbs 22:6) and Ephesians 6:4 we *bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*.
- What does he mean? Not just saying **grace** at **dinner** and sending them to **Sunday school** and **scripture**.
- The home is **meant to be** (and very much was in **Jewish culture** of the time) the **centre of childhood education** about the **ways of the Lord**.
- This was a **basic requirement** of the **Torah itself** (Deut 11:18-21). *Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates...*
- Paul carries over this same language and practice into the new covenant. Here, though, it is the '**way of the Lord (Jesus)**' that must be passed on.
- Are we as families **instructing** our children about **Jesus' life** and **teaching** and how they apply to **daily life**?
- What **Cath** and our wonderful **children's leaders** do here on Sundays is only **ever** meant to **compliment** what happens at **home**. It can **never substitute** for that!
- Is the **culture** of your home **soaked** in the **love** for the **Lord Jesus**? Is he **spoken** of? Is the Bible **read** as a **family**? Do you **encourage** your children to **pray**? Do you **gather** around as a family at various times in the week and pray as a family?
- Dads – notice this is **addressed** to **us**... **bring** them up in the **training** and **instruction** of the **Lord Jesus**.
- Its about time we started taking this seriously... //
- So – we have talked about two keys so far – **your** relationship with God, **their** relationship with God...
- And the third key – is to be parents.
- You are **not** to be your children's best **mate**...
- They are to **honour** and **obey** (Eph 6:1-3) – and you ought to **expect** it and **demand** it... because that will be the best way you can actually parent them... and if your child is **NOT** obeying or honouring – than you must do whatever it takes to reverse that

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situation.

- Stop letting your children call all the shots... or run the show!
 - Stop letting them have their own way because you want them to **like** you!
 - This may mean **tough love** some times... discipline, curfews, guidance... setting expectations and boundaries...
 - But... parents are to parent! That's our job!
 - I don't mean by that that you become harsh cruel dictators...! I'm not talking about that at all...
 - ... but understand that you have been given a unique role as parents... and sometimes that will mean making hard decisions for your children... but that is what they need.
 - And being parents will mean talking to our children.
 - About everything – about nothing...
 - Making time – and again – as we saw last week – rejecting the 'quality time' paradigm...
 - In means finding things you enjoy doing together... so you can talk!
 - It may mean lying on the bed late at night talking about their day or what's on their mind...
 - It means showing them you are interested in them.
 - Dads... we have to work extra hard at this – and I guess there'll be more on this next week – but if you're not seeing your kids Mon-Fri – get a new job!
 - For when it comes to home and family – its all about relationship.
 - Your relationship with God.
 - Your children's relationship with God
 - And your relationship as parents.
 - So – how can we take this home?
 - As the risk of become predictable... 10 ways to ensure home and family life is all about relationship...
- 1. ensure your relationship with God is first!**
- Children will learn much just by watching you – observing you. And no – you won't ever reach perfection, but it is really important that they see in you what it means to live in relationship with God.
 - Do they see in you, what it means to put Christ first?To do everything in his name? to wrestle with issues of godliness?
 - Do they see in you the love of the Father for others... unconditional, sacrificial, generous –
 - Will they catch you at prayer? Do they catch you reading your Bible?

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- Seeing you live out your life as a Christian will deeply impact them – and deepen your relationship with them...
2. **...your marriage second**
 - And work on your marriage. Go and listen again to last week's message... and ensure your marriage is set to remain strong and firm...
 - Because when your marriage is **robust** and **strong** – that in itself will model to your children what good relationships are all about...
 3. **your relationship with your children third...** third most important set of relationships in your life. Does the way you live life now and prioritise now, reflect that?
 4. **pray with your children every bed time** – just do it. Make it part of the bed time routine. Give thanks for the day. Praise God for Jesus and what he's done. Commit tomorrow to him. Ask him to make you more like Jesus every day. It will teach them about prayer, it will comfort them, it will set them up for tomorrow.
 5. **read the Bible with your children as often as you can** – together, or individually... perhaps from story books at first... but don't leave it too long before you're simply reading the Bible... doesn't have to be long. You don't even have to interpret it or apply it for them. They may ask questions you can't answer... that doesn't matter... you can find out later for them... but read the Bible with your children as often as you can.
 6. **Practise God talk** – include him in conversation around the dinner table... or when you are in the car... in other words.. don't have a time of day when you get all religious... if its relationship we're talking about – then make the relationship a part of every day, any moment – naturally
 7. **don't miss church/Sunday School/youth group** – as a parent has to say tough things every now and again ... so do pastors... I'm frankly amazed sometimes at whole families missing church for a couple of weeks in a row... sometimes because someone had a party or a soccer try out... and then even though there is the option of 3 other services – not coming at all... have you ever stopped to think what this is saying to your children.... That some party is more important than meeting with God's people and hearing God's word?? How can that be?
 8. **eat together as often as you can** - as many times in the week... eat, talk, laugh together....
 9. **create one on one opportunities...** something very special when kids have the full undivided attention of one of their parents...
 10. **learn to enjoy, not to endure..** to my shame – I've had to learn this... because sometimes kids have just been a nuisance stopping me from selfishly doing what it is I want to do... you'll never win on that attitude!! Learn to enjoy, not endure...
- ...for when it comes to home and family – its all about relationship!