

Introduction:

- In February I will be preaching into the subject of family and also marriage.
- I am going to share with you six truths on how to build a strong family and happy home that loves God and loves each other. These are six truths I would stress with any couple about to get married or to start their home. I believe these six truths will change your life and future if you will receive and embrace them today. When found you have to hang on to them like Joshua did.
- *"And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**"* (Joshua 24:15, ESV)
- Joshua made a decision to served the Lord. There are decisions we must make if we want our families to serve the Lord.
- "Recently I saw a picture of a famous painting by Norman Rockwell that appeared on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1959. It shows a suburban family going off to church, led by the oldest sister followed by mom who is followed by the younger sister. All three women are dressed for church. Following them is a young boy who appears to be going with some reluctance. What's the problem? At the center of the painting is dear old dad slumped in a chair, in his pajamas, reading the paper with a cigarette in his hand. As junior walks by, he casts a longing eye at his father. He's going to church, but he'd rather be with his dad. Men, when will we learn that our actions speak louder than our words?" Ray Pritchard. We gotta get in the game! Let us begin. The first truth I would teach my family is that there is one God.

I. There Is One God And we must make a commitment to serve Him. Joshua at the time of his death said...

- A. *"Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord."* (Joshua 24:14, ESV) When you want something more than God then it has become your god/idol.
1. Fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and faithfulness.
 2. Put away the god's your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt.
 3. He says again, serve the Lord.
- B. To be a follower of God, this is the starting point. Realize there is only One God. Our God.
1. *"Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'"* (Mark 12:29-30, ESV)

2. Jesus himself declares that the first two things we are called to realize and do are:
 - a) Know that there is just one God
 - b) Love.

C. Application:

1. When you want something more than God then it has become your god/idol.
2. The rich man in Mt 19:16 could not part with his wealth so he turned from God.
3. Judges 14-16 Samson, the strong man believed in his abilities and forgot God.
4. If you have another god. or a different god. Then you are in big spiritual trouble.
5. Esau sold his birthright for fruit snacks.

II. Love Him - Second truth. And this is a big one.

A. Love comes from a Greek word, agape. It means unconditional love.

1. What is unconditional love?
 - a) I.e. It means, if you do not do this for me then I will not love you. There is a condition. It means that you will be given love if you meet certain conditions, or do certain things.
 2. Examples: 1. I will give you fruit snacks if you pick up that Kleenex. 2. I will give you a hug when you finish your homework.
 3. "Unconditional love isn't just what we feel. It's what the object of our love feels: love without strings attached." Laura Markham, Psychology Today.
 - a) This is huge! When I love you unconditionally it is all about how you feel and not me.
 - b) We often make it about us because we are the ones choosing to love when loving is difficult or not what our flesh wants to do. *"If only he'd be nicer to his sister...He's so fearful...I just want her to sleep through the night...He's great, but I would have loved a daughter this time...She argues with everything I say; why does she have to be so strong-willed?...Why does he lose everything?! He drives me crazy!"*ibid.

B. How to love unconditionally? *"Jesus answered, ... And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."* (Mark 12:29-30, ESV)

1. With all your heart - the heart is the core of who you are.
2. With all your soul - is what give you life or vitality.
3. With all your mind - that part of you that thinks and understands.
4. With all your strength - ability, capacity, power, strength

III. Love Each Other

A. *"The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other*

commandment greater than these."" (Mark 12:31, ESV)

- B. Love each other - home is the anvil of life where learning to love others is hammered out.
1. Do you know what an anvil is? It is a thing on which something metal is hammered out. Hammer is never to hurt you it is to shape you. That is why I am using a hammer and anvil. Loving each other well takes work! Hard work.
 2. First you have to heat things up really hot.(this is not tempers it is the intentionality of walking love when you do not feel like it). You can get burned when things are hot.
 3. When it is hot (perfect situation) Then you start hammering the metal into a specific shape.
- C. Starting with you dad and mom. (attitude and convictions) *"The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.*"" (Mark 12:31, ESV)

IV. Be A Grace Based Family

- A. Grace is the ability of God in me to do what I cannot do in and of myself.
- B. Willing to forgive. Forgiveness comes as a product of love.

V. Learn To Work Through Pain

- A. Do this together as a family. Minister to one another's hurts and needs. So much unity comes when this happens. Ie. The Lion with a thorn in his paw. The boy takes it out and they are friends forever. Parents what happens when you help those little tigers God has given you and you remove their thorn? Unity, loyalty, family.
- B. The typical family:
1. Denies the pain. Theirs and others.
 2. Hides their pain. Theirs.
 3. Ignores their pain. Theirs and others.
 4. When you do that you are setting your family up to numb their pain.
 5. Christian families must learn to process pain.
 - a) Acknowledge when pain is there. "My heart is hurting."
 - b) Bring the pain into the open. Speak it. "Your words hurt me." "My heart was hurt when you said/did..."
 - c) Pay attention to pain. **Pain is a sign that something is wrong.** It hurts for a reason. If your heart is hurting there is a reason.
- C. Learn together to process pain. Jesus processed pain.
1. One of you is a traitor (betrayal, everyone experience this), Judas
 2. Another will deny me three times. Peter.

3. Proverbs 18:14, "*The spirit of man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?*" If your spirit gets crushed through life's pain and adversities, you will find yourself depressed and weakened. Rejection and loneliness will fill the void or anger and rebellion.

D. How to walk it out.

1. Go first to God / His word. Be honest with Him. "God my heart hurts."
2. Ask yourself, "Am I at fault in any way." If necessary seek and extend forgiveness.
3. Be willing to take responsibility and not move into a victim mentality
4. If necessary talk with a mature trusted person. Ask for continued prayer for healing and comfort
5. 2 Cor 1:3-4 God comforts us so we can reach out to others who need comfort. Paul is telling the Corinthian you can work this into the whole group.

VI. Remember your spiritual heritage.

- A. You are building and leaving a legacy at the same time. Children you are building a legacy. Parents you are leaving one.
- B. "*And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" (Joshua 24:15, ESV) Joshua made a decision to that he and his family would serve God.

Conclusion:

- Parents, I can't guarantee that your children will serve the Lord. But I can say with confidence, that you choosing to live for God as parent, will tip the scale in Gods direction. Like Joshua you have to make a decision to choose. Bob Dylan in his Christian days sang this song.
- "You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody." Bob Dylan, *Slow Train Coming*.