

Characteristics of a Strong Family

Joshua 24:15

INTRODUCTION:

- A. In another study we noted that the traditional family unit is in trouble. Looking at the lives of Eli and his two sons Hophni (Hof-ny) and Phinehas (Fin-e-has), two reasons were discussed:
1. Husbands and wives are more preoccupied with their careers than they are with their own family's needs.
 2. Parents are not disciplining their children.
- B. In this study we will want to note some characteristics of a strong and healthy family.
- C. A few years ago, professor Nick Stinnett who was the chairman of the Department of Human Development and the Family at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, launched a fascinating research project on "What makes Families Strong." All together, Dr. Stinnett studied 3,000 families and collected a great deal of information. From his research, Dr. Stinnett found several main qualities in strong families. Some of his findings will be incorporated into various parts of our study today.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A STRONG & HEALTHY FAMILY

A. Characteristic #1: WE MUST HAVE A SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT.

1. Look at Joshua.
 - a. He was a military leader and a spiritual to the nation of Israel.
 - b. Listen as he explains in [Joshua 24:15](#) the relationship that a family should have towards God. "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of 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."
 - c. Joshua and his family made a commitment to serve God together. And this is what God expects from us. Have you and your family made that commitment?
 - d. Families that are committed to God are families that are more likely to stay together.
 - e. **Illustration:** Billboards & bumper stickers: "Families that pray together, stay together." Another way of saying it: "The family that prays together, stays together."
 - f. Families that are committed to God tend to love and respect each other more than families who do not have a commitment to God.

2. Families that are committed to God tend to produce successful godly and moral offspring.

Illustration: A study was once done on two early American characters, Max Jukes and Jonathan Edwards. While the results are interesting, they illustrate the statement I just made, “Families that are committed to God tend to produce successful godly and moral offspring.”

- a. **Max Jukes** lived in New York and had nothing to do with the Christian faith. Of 1,026 of his descendants who were studied,
 - 300 died prematurely.
 - 100 served an average of 13 years in the penitentiary.
 - 100 became public prostitutes.
 - 100 became alcoholics.
- b. The same study examined 720 descendants of **Jonathan Edwards**, a man who served God. Of these:
 - 300 became preachers.
 - 65 became college professors.
 - 13 were university presidents.
 - 60 became authors.
 - 3 became United States congressmen
 - 1 became Vice-President of the United States.
- c. It is easy to see that families who are committed to God produce successful and moral offspring.
- c. Is your family committed to God?
3. If you have a family that loves and serves God together then praise the Lord. Keep up the good work.
4. However, if your family is not committed to God, then I would like to encourage you to go home, sit down and together make a godly commitment for both time and eternity.
 - a. Make a commitment to love and serve God together.
 - b. Make a commitment to pray together each day.
 - c. Make a commitment to attend the services of the church regularly and together.
 - d. Make a commitment to lead others to Christ, and begin with all your family members.
5. If you truly want to have a strong and happy family, then follow Joshua’s commitment: “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

B. **Characteristic #2: WE MUST SPEND QUALITY TIME TOGETHER.**

1. If my arithmetic (today we call it math) is correct, (and I think it is because all I learned about arithmetic I didn’t learn from Jethro on the Beverly Hillbillies), then adults living in a family household have:
 - 168 hours of life available to them each week.

- 56 of those hours are needed for sleeping (not counting anytime spent sleeping in church).
 - Roughly 50 of the 112 hours left are consumed by work-related activities.
 - Out of the 62 hours left, 10 hours are generally used for personal and individual time.
 - This leaves 52 hours a week for family time. It doesn't seem like we have this much potential time together.
 - a. Out of these 52 hours a week, the majority of American families watch TV together. Friends, this is not the quality time I am talking about.
 - b. Quality time consists of:
 1. Having family devotionals.
 2. Doing homework or other educational activities together.
 3. Going out for a fun meal together.
 4. Experiencing a cultural activity together, such as a museum, zoo, or a play.
 5. Playing a sport together.
 6. Spending time talking.
 - c. A family that spends quality time together normally has a healthy family life. On the other hand, a family that spends little time with each other, tends to be fragmented and uninterested in each other. They feel distanced from each other.
2. How can you begin spending more time together? Where do you start?
- a. Go home, have a family meeting, and develop a family "philosophy" of leisure time. Ask the family what they would like to do together.
 - b. Next, plan some family activities.
 - c. And then arrange your busy schedules so that you can be there for the activity.
 1. Maybe one special night each week that belongs strictly to the family.
 2. Take turns in planning what will be done with the evening.
3. Friends, I am not suggesting that you spend all of your time with each other.
- a. Everyone needs his or her own space and time.
 - b. But I am saying to you to do some things together as a family.
 - c. And if you do, then you are on your way to having a strong and healthy family.

C. Characteristic #3: WE MUST HAVE GOOD FAMILY COMMUNICATION.

1. Communication is to love what blood is to the body. When communication stops, love begins to die.

2. According to Dr. David Mace, past president of the American Association of Marriage Counselors, “Poor communication is the main problem in 86 percent of all troubled marriages.
3. Columnist Ann Landers once said, “The most important single ingredient in a marriage is the ability to communicate. If my mail is a fair reflection of what goes on with Mr. and Mrs. America behind closed doors (and I think it is), most marital problems stem from the inability of two people to talk to each other. How precious is the ability to communicate! . . . The couples who are secure in marriage can be honest about all kinds of feeling.”
4. Permit me to suggest four rules in good communication.
 - a. **The first rule in good communication is knowledge.**
 1. How much do you know about your spouse.
 2. What is your wife’s favorite:

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| a. Food? | e. TV program? |
| b. Beverage? | f. Movie? |
| c. Place to eat? | g. Sport? |
| d. Color? | h. Favorite Bible character? |
 3. If you do not know very much about your spouse and children, then you must not be very interested in them.
 4. Good communication first seeks to know one another better.
 - b. **The second rule in good communication is speaking the truth in love.**
 1. [Ephesians 4:15](#) - “. . . Speaking the truth in love.” While this refers directly to the gospel, the principle of communicating truth in love in all areas of life seems fitting.
 2. Let’s be honest, all strong and healthy families at times have arguments. In fact, you can be come so angry at each other, that you say things that you really don’t mean.
 3. Before we say something that is not true, we should reflect on the words of Paul in [Ephesians 4:29](#) - “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” Another translation renders it, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out f your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.”
 - c. **The third rule in good communication is to be positive.**
 1. A marriage that is 85 percent positive and only 15 percent negative will appear 90 percent bad if the couple spends 90 percent of its time arguing over the 15 percent problem.
 2. We need to stop fighting over the negative areas (finances, housework, children, etc.) and begin focusing on the good and positive areas.
 - d. **The fourth rule in good communication is to be an active listener.**

1. The Pharisees and the Sadducees of Jesus' day heard sounds, but they did not listen. Jesus said in **Matthew 13:13** - "... Though hearing, they do not hear."
2. Their inner ears were closed by their preconceived views. Some people are like that today. They hear what they only want to hear.
3. In the family, however, we need to truly listen to what is being said. Everyone wants to be listened to . . . everyone wants to be heard.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Although the family unit is in trouble, we as Christians can help turn that around by making sure that we have strong and healthy families.
- B. To have a strong and healthy family, we must have:
 1. **A spiritual commitment.**
 2. **Spend quality time together.**
 3. **Good communication.**
- C. Not only should you have a strong and healthy family, you should also have a strong, healthy, and faithful relationship with God.
- D. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**