



Summer 2010

Family Devotions

Week 7

August 2 - 6

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Monday August 2, 2010

Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. ~ Ecclesiastes 5:2

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Ask if anyone in the family has ever had their feelings hurt by what someone else said. Why did it hurt?

As a child, Albert Einstein rarely took the initiative to speak. At the dinner table one evening, he finally broke his most recent reticence: "The soup is too hot," he complained. His parents, greatly relieved, asked him why he had not spoken in so long. "Because," he replied, "up to now everything has been in order."

There is no doubt: our sometimes too-quick tongues can get us into trouble. We've said things we've regretted. We can feel sorry. We can apologize. We can try to "make up" for words said too hastily. However, sometimes, the words linger in a person's mind, even after forgiveness.

Have you ever played the game Telephone? You sit in a circle with a group of people and one person whispers a phrase to the person next to him or her. Then, each person keeps whispering the phrase around the circle until it reaches the last person, who repeats the whispered statement out loud. What started out as "Pizza tastes great" can end up as "Pete's a great ape!"

It's funny to laugh at how twisted the sentence became as it got passed around. Gossip can work the same way, but it's not so funny. In fact, it can be very hurtful. Have you ever gossiped or been gossiped about? Let's find out more about gossiping.

Ask how each family member can be part of God's plan to encourage people rather than hurt them. How can we stop hurtful words by someone else aimed toward another person?

The closer the people are in our lives, the more that hastily uttered untactful things can hurt. Let's learn from Solomon's wisdom: "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11).

Tuesday, August 3, 2010

Preparation:

- Ask each family member to take a sheet of paper, draw a line down the center from top to bottom. At the top of the left column write a + sign; at the top of the right column draw a Δ , or delta sign which, in mathematics, is the sign for change (loose definition).
- Ask each family member to write on the + side things they like about your family; on the Δ side ask them to write things they might change if they could. Each column should be equal in number.
- Assure them the lists will not necessarily be read aloud.

► For God so loved... ~ John 3:16a

► "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

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Background:

Hate has never resulted in someone coming to salvation in Christ. However, there are many stories of how love did. The hard-hearted father is brought to his knees when his precious child is near death's door. The worldly man is weaned away from a sinful life and toward the Light, through a godly lady with whom he falls in love.

Sometimes it is the "taking away" of love that does the trick. The talented athlete's injury yanks from him his foremost worldly love, opening his heart for a new love. The loss of a loved one nudges the lost soul to seek love on a higher plane.

It is much more than feeling and sentimentalism; that is the world's definition of love. It is the holy gravity of the universe: God's drawing men to Himself. It is what kept Jesus on the Cross, when just a Word would have brought legions of angels to wipe out his persecutors and release Him from His suffering.

Ask two family members to read the following verses.

► For God so loved... ~ John 3:16a

► And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love ~ 1 Corinthians 13:13

Lead a conversation on what love really is.

Love is not a feeling though it produces many wonderful feelings. Love is a commitment to unreservedly give yourself to others. If love stops, then it was not love at all. If love

finds barriers with a person's personality, peculiarities, looks or gifts, then that love was merely enchantment or lust. Genuine love will never fail because it does not give up; it can not give up. Love's strength does not come from what you see in a person but in your commitment to that person. Real love doesn't stop but grows in its beauty day by day. Love is not ignorant of the troubles, the pain, the hurt, the shame that is sometimes provoked, for in these circumstances love grows stronger. Your love must go on, no matter what, just as God's love does.

Ask family members to look at the lists they prepared. Ask: "When you consider the items on your lists, how can you express love to the others in our family?"

Pray:

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us more than we can imagine and far more than we deserve. Help us to know how to honor your love by expressing love to each other. Thank you for placing us in this family. Amen.

Wednesday, August 4, 2010

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ~ Philippians 1:21

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Goal:

- To identify sources of joy.
- Identifying Jesus as the source of true.
- To affirm and encourage each family member.

The longer one lives for Christ, the more they understand, as did the Apostle Paul, this world is indeed not my home. I am an alien and a stranger in this world (Hebrews 11:13) because my citizenship is in Heaven (Philippians 3:20).

However, it's more than that. It's about the consuming joy of living for Jesus and for others. "For me to live is Christ" because...

I don't care to live in a world in which I cannot have someone to encourage each day.

- I don't want legs, unless I can go here and there to help someone in the Christian way.
- What's the use of living, if I cannot give of myself—my money, my time, my spiritual gifts, my joy—for others?
- Why have a voice, if I cannot tell of the unsearchable riches of Christ and lift up a downhearted soul?
- Why have arms, if there is no one around to give a holy hug and tell them how great they are to me?
- My life would be poor, unless God lets me use His Word to build up someone in the faith.
- I can't live a world in which I cannot have Christian friends and a Christian wife, to partner with and to share it all.

You might think that this is all sentimental rhetoric. Be assured: it is not. Everyday we should model for family, friends, and coworkers our agreement Paul, "For to me, to live is Christ..."

- Ask the family to name things that make them happy.
- Discuss ways your family can find joy in service and ministry to others.

Pablo Casals, world-famous cellist and US Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient suggested we should say to children: "Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the world there is no other child exactly like you...And look at your body – what a wonder it is! Your legs, your arms your cunning fingers, the way you move! You may become a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything."

Thursday, August 5, 2010

Jesus: "Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand - shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in Heaven." ~ Matthew 5:16 (The Message)

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"Caroline's very bright," President John F. Kennedy's father, Joseph, once remarked of his granddaughter, "smarter than you were, Jack, at that age."

"Yes, she is," Kennedy playfully replied, "but look who she has for a father!"

Look who we have as a Heavenly Father...and His light (1 Timothy 6:16, 1 John 1:5). Our light should have star magnitude (Philippians 2:5).

Have you ever been in one of those services in which the congregation has an unlit candle, one person has a lit candle, and the flame is passed on from one person to another?

There is a good picture of raising children. What light are you passing on?

Friday, August 6, 2010

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. ~ 2 Corinthians 3:18, NKJV)

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Can you see, in your children's faces, something of your own? Have you realized that, as you have gotten older, you find yourself doing things and saying things that your parents did? You can't fight the genes!

It should be true spiritually, also. The longer we live for Christ, the more we should "look" like Him, bit by bit, or as our text says, "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

A cleaning lady worked in a building where a sculptor worked. Over a period of months, she watched a huge, rough boulder in the sculptor's room changed into an amazingly life-like image of Abraham Lincoln. One day, the cleaning lady encountered the sculptor's assistant. She said, "How did he know that Abraham Lincoln was inside that big rock?" The assistant simply replied, "Vision."

Allow God, through His Spirit and your willingness, form Christ in you (Galatians 4:19). Encourage your children to start early, seeking God with a willing spirit.