

“The Family That Stays Together, Stays Together”

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Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0 : 00] family togetherness. We're going to look at five different things, like categories that we can look at when it comes to family togetherness, and just some specific ideas, things to think about regarding those things.

Then I'd like to finish off just talking about each of our roles in a family. Every family, there's different parts of a family. We each have different roles and responsibilities. And we'll look at how we can think about family togetherness from each of our roles.

You know, you look around, and there's a lot of broken families out there. And there really is a big problem, not just in this country, it's all over the world, with families that are broken.

And there are constant forces out in the world that so many succumb to, that's causing families to be broken apart. And sometimes not completely broken, sometimes it's just to be distant from one another.

You know, we know about divorce, and single-parent homes, and things like that. But sometimes there are families, they live under the same roof, and they're not really living like a family should.

[1 : 17] They're distant from one another. And it can be different things. I mean, family brokenness can be caused by sin, especially sexual morality. But sometimes just the cares of life, all the difficult things that we have to deal with.

And then also there are so many distractions in life, things that can distract us from what's really important. And so we'll talk about some of those things.

Life is all about relationships. Is that true? When you think about what is life about, life is about relationships. Now, did you know that before man was ever created, or even the world or the universe was ever created, that there were relationships?

The God who created us, the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, they've been relating to each other for all of eternity. Isn't that amazing?

It's hard to think about, right? Eternity, that's kind of a hard thing to grasp. But there has been a relationship among what the Bible calls the Godhead for all of eternity. And God decided to do something.

[2 : 33] He decided that he wanted to create more people in his own image, in his own likeness, because he wanted more relationships. Isn't that incredible?

He wanted to expand his family. And so, God's design for us is that one, we would relate to him.

He wants a relationship between us and him. And two, he wants us to relate to one another. And he wants those relationships to exist, one.

He wants those relationships to be healthy. In the law of Moses, let me go back. So, Jesus was asked a question from, I forget who it was, but this is in Matthew 22, verse 36.

And somebody asked him, he said, Teacher, which is the greatest commandment, or greatest commandment, singular, in the law? Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your hearts, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

[3 : 43] This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. And so, Jesus is saying, hey, listen, here's the law that Moses gave to Israel, and there are two important things.

The first one is love God, and that's the relationship between us and God. That's the most important thing in all of life, is loving God. And then the second most important thing is that we love each other, because that is the purpose that God gave for our lives.

And we all know the story, or many of us do, I think, that as we look at the history of mankind and what happened, where did all this sin and brokenness come from? Sin entered into the world with our first parents, and it broke those relationships.

Our relationship with God was broken, and it also impacted our relationship with each other. Thinking back to that time with our first parents, what happened when Adam and Eve sinned?

They hid. They ran away from who? They ran away from God. They were hiding. They were ashamed. And the Bible mentions, there's a reference to walking in the garden with God, and they had a relationship with him.

[5 : 08] And then when sin entered, that relationship was broken, and they ran away from God. They hid from him. And then we look at the very first family, two brothers, Cain and Abel.

And what a tragedy, that because of sin, what should be one of the closest bonds in all of life, two brothers, turned into, what do we call it?

What do I say? Patricide. You know, one brother killing another. Fratricide, thank you. And that was the impact of sin.

But our relationships were so important to God, our relationship with him and each other, that God did something. He sacrificed himself to repair that separation. And so anybody who's willing, and this is the message we call the gospel, can receive that gift, that sacrifice made for us.

God's gift of eternal life. And eternal life, the gift of eternal life, what is that anyway? And we think of eternal life, eternal life is living forever, right?

[6 : 16] Life forever. But here's the big question, what kind of life? Forever. Well, Jesus said something really interesting. This is John 17, 3. He said, And this is eternal life, that they may know you.

This is Jesus speaking to his Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. That's what eternal life is. What God accomplished for us, he accomplished something for us, so that we could forever enjoy him, have a relationship with him.

And so that is the life that he wants from us, to enjoy him. And for those of us who have received that gift, God intends for us, in our day in and day out walk, to walk with him, to enjoy him, to relate to him.

And really, that's the key to living the Christian life. Sometimes people struggle living the Christian life, struggle with sin, struggle with temptation, struggle with doubt.

But really, God wants us to walk with him. If we want to be, have a victorious Christian life, walking with him is, is that key.

[7 : 32] And so many make a mistake. Right? And this is something very important that we teach, here in our church. And I think it's important to bring out of this conference. They make the mistake of living according to the law, and not according to God's grace.

Thinking that rules and regulations and rituals can help improve, restore or improve our relationship with him. But the only thing that the law can do is reveal our brokenness.

It can show us that things aren't how they ought to be, but the law can't help us with what we really need. And you know what can? The only thing that can? It's, it's God.

It's just God. Himself. Knowing him. And he, he accomplished something so that the thing that was separating us from him is done away with.

The Bible says that the law that condemned us was nailed to the cross. And it no longer has any power to separate us from God. Paul says this in Philippians.

[8 : 36] And this relates to our relationship especially with God. Philippians chapter 3, verse 3. For we are the circumcision who worship God in the flesh. He's talking about the difference between the, the way that things worked under the Jewish, the age of the Jews, under the Jewish dispensation, and, and what God has accomplished for us now.

For we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit. We rejoice in Jesus Christ and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so.

I was circumcised on the eighth day. I was of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin. A Hebrew of the Hebrews. And concerning the law, I was a Pharisee. Concerning zeal, persecuting the church, and concerning the righteousness, which is the law, I was blameless.

But what things were gained to me, these I have counted for loss. Counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.

Everything is meaningless. It's worthless compared to knowing him. There's nothing that compares to knowing him.

[10 : 02] Nothing in this life that is more important. And so with that as our foundation, as our framework, knowing God is the foundation of our lives.

If we want healthy families, a healthy family life, if we want healthy relationships between our family members, then we have to start with a healthy relationship with the Lord.

We have to have a healthy and thriving relationship with a God who gave us life and who gave us not only life here in the flesh, but eternal life as well.

But we shouldn't make the mistake to think that just us parents need to have that healthy relationship. everyone in the family.

And you know, I am shocked at how many Christian parents kind of neglect this whole thing of really pointing your children to Christ all the time.

[11 : 06] Teaching them regularly about the salvation that has been given to them. Teaching them how to walk with God. Teaching them to love the Lord.

teaching them to trust in His promise. And you know what? It's not just parents teaching their children or encouraging their children to do these things.

Even though they have the most responsibility, right, to do that. But you know, husbands, they can point their wives to Christ too. And wives, can they point their husbands to Christ?

Yeah, absolutely. brothers and sisters can point each other to Christ to encourage your little brother, your little sister, your big brother, your big sister to love the Lord, to enjoy Him.

Have you thought about that? No, it's not that you're not the primary person in charge of the family, but you can take those opportunities to encourage your brothers and sisters. And even children can encourage their parents.

[12 : 15] Right? Isn't that true? to love the Lord, to enjoy Him. And when we, so when we learn to rightly, or to relate rightly to God, then I think our other relationships will follow, including our family relationships.

But here's the deal. If we are going to do these things, if we are going to encourage one another, and this is getting back to the parents, we have to have a plan.

We need to be intentional. And so we're going to get into some of the meat of some specific things that we can do. There are constant forces out in the world that are trying to push our families apart.

And we need to fight against those. It's like entropy. Anybody, you know, in their science, textbooks, physics, entropy is that, it's not a force, it's a principle of science where everything is tending towards decay, right?

All fires burn out. Things, when you leave your car outside sitting in the grass for 10 years, what happens? Does it turn nicer? No, it decays, it gets worse, it rusts out.

[13 : 24] If you don't take care of things. If you don't take care of your family, things are going to fall apart. So we need to be constantly tending to that garden.

So here's five things or five categories, really, of things that we can do together. And by the way, so the title of this message, I'll get to that right now.

Have you ever heard the quote, the family that prays together stays together? It's like a nice sing-songy thing, right? The family that prays together stays together. And I heard somebody once, that's very true, right?

I mean, families should pray together. But I heard somebody once, this was years ago say, you know what? There's another saying, the family that stays together, stays together.

And that's true too. When we see so many families kind of drifting apart, you know, even if they pray together on Sundays, that may not be sufficient. And so the title of this message is the family that stays together stays together.

[14 : 29] And here's the vision I kind of want to cast. So five different categories. The first one, the things that we can consider, what we can do, is we can eat together.

That seems pretty simple, right? Just having meals together. But you know that most families don't do that on a regular basis?

I just quickly looked up statistics. In this country, anyway, less than half families eat together on any kind of regular basis. Less than half.

And what a missed opportunity. For our family, we focus on dinner. We try to make our dinner time a family affair. And no, it doesn't always work out.

Sometimes we've got things going on, but we try to make that a habit in our families. For other families, dinner doesn't work out because of job schedules or whatever it might be. But I would encourage you, try to have at least one meal a day where you're doing it all together as a family.

[15 : 32] It's an opportunity for you to sit down together, you know, pray and eat that meal together, talk and enjoy one another. Make it a habit. Number two is working together.

Work is a fact of life. And, you know, we don't have the same maybe opportunities to all work together like during more of the agricultural period where everybody was farming and the family just had to work together just to survive and make it.

Now, a lot of times, you know, dads go to work and drives off to an office or some other place of work and people, our families are split up.

And what can we do as a family when we work to work together? And so just a few ideas. Work on projects together, right? Everybody has house projects, right?

Things you need to fix the porch or work on the family garden or something like that. Those are the things that you can do together. And I'd like to advocate for this.

[16 : 38] So when it comes to work, we usually try to be as efficient as possible, right? Get the job done as quickly as possible so we can play. And this is regardless of whether you're a family of ten people or it's just two of you.

And so one of the things we can do to get things more efficient is here that we've got two jobs. You go and do that one and I'll go and do this one. Maybe we have five jobs and we'll put a couple people over there and a couple people over there or maybe we'll just split everybody up.

You know, that's more efficient, right? Divide and conquer. But everybody's off working by themselves. You know, that's fine. That's fine. There's not anything inherently wrong with that.

But hey, can we, in kind of looking for a vision for how we can have a more close-knit family, can we look at opportunities when we have projects, when we have chores to do them together?

Whether it's the whole family working on a garden. We're out there all in the garden at the same time. Or maybe it's just two or three, but in, you know, smaller groups. But it's opportunities to build relationships together while you're working.

[17 : 45] Even just a mom and a dad. Or if you have kids, your kids are gone. You know, can we work together on projects that we have around the house?

All right, number three. Category number three. Playing together. Life is not all about work, but we need to take some rest and it's good to play.

And so a lot of times, you know, especially with families and you got kids and you got like sports programs, really competitive sports, and you're going to join this team over here and this kid's going to join that team over there and we're trying to, you know, drive this kid over here.

The family is split up a lot of the week because of those kinds of things. Are there opportunities where we can do these kinds of things together as a family? And it might be as simple as, hey, we're going to have, we have baseball.

And you know what? Dad's going to coach. And dad and his, you know, one or two of his kids or whatever, they can be together during that time. We, one of the things, things we've taken advantage of is there's a soccer program about a half an hour from us.

[19 : 02] Actually, now there's one just ten minutes from us where it's for homeschoolers and everybody gets together, the whole family. They have a bunch of fields and it's Friday night for two hours and they split kids up by age group but everybody's in the same huge field and they play and the parents help coach and it's a great time but we're all doing it together.

And we found that to be super, super helpful. Another thing is movie nights. Anybody like movie nights? I love movie nights. And so, you know, it's so easy, right?

There's some, sometimes, some people prefer one movie and other people prefer another movie. Let's just talk, let's start with just husbands and wives. Right?

So, husband wants to watch John Wayne. Does his wife want to watch John Wayne? No. She wants to watch Sense and Sensibility.

For the 25th time, by the way. It gets better every time. And you know what? It could be easy, right?

[20 : 18] Well, I'm going to go down in the basement and you're going to go here and we'll just, you know, we'll watch our things together and we'll enjoy what we like to enjoy. But you know what?

That's a missed opportunity. You know, it's really fun watching things together, even if it's not your favorite. Right? And so, yes, I have watched *Sense and Sensibility*, not 25 times, but at least three or four.

And it's a good movie, by the way. It's solid. And so, these are opportunities where we can, you know, be a part of each other's lives. And wives, yes, maybe you could endure through a John Wayne movie with your husband.

And then, you know, you've got, we've had, sometimes we'll do big kid movies and little kid movies. And sometimes it's difficult because, you know, some movies can have some scary things in them or tense scenes or whatever that some of the little kids might not enjoy.

So we've, we'll sometimes split up the family because of that. But it always kind of makes me feel a little, oh man, I wish we were doing this all together. And so I try to, try to look for opportunities where, let's, let's do this all together.

[21 : 33] Something that we all can enjoy. So that's playing together. The fourth one is worshipping together. Worshipping together. And the easiest one is, right, going to church together as a family.

But beyond that, I think it's important that we think of our worship of the Lord, not just as Sundays, right? Not just as Sunday morning worship. But there's an opportunity to worship together as families on a regular basis.

In fact, people, you know, trying to think of who, but there's a, there's a, I'm trying to remember the name of the guy, or is it Richard Baxter, or, talks about family worship.

Family worship. Doing worship as a family. And that is, can be as simple as just reading the Bible together. Or having an opportunity, whether it's at the dinner table, or maybe after dinner, or it could be in the morning, where you just talk about, talk about the Bible.

Read the Bible. Talk about it. You could watch a video about the Bible. You could just talk about the Lord. You could share testimonies. You could sing songs together. There's so many opportunities.

[22 : 48] Something that we do on a regular basis where we're worshipping together. We're not having just our family devotions where everybody goes and splits up and does it on their own. And I think that is important to teach our children, especially, to have their own relationship with the Lord where they are going and spending that time alone.

I think that is very, very important. But it shouldn't be the only thing. We have both, right? Individual and then together as a family. And then number five, and it kind of relates to number four, but I thought it was important enough to bring out to have it separate.

But sing together. This is something that I don't think we, I think we've more come into maybe in the last four or five years in our family. But we have learned to enjoy so much singing together.

Here's another scripture. Ephesians 5.17 says this, Speaking to one another, this is talking about the church, but it also applies to the family. Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. We have an opportunity all the time. And we can do it on our own, right? You can sing to the Lord when you wake up in the morning. You can sing while you're washing the dishes.

[23 : 58] You can sing while you're driving the car to work. Sing to the Lord. But we can also sing together. It isn't amazing, you know, when you hear a group of people singing together just has so much more impact.

And as you read this verse, maybe it's not this verse. This is speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

There's another verse that talks about the same thing. But it uses the word encouraging one another or building each other up. We can build each other up when we are singing together. So with those, what is it, five categories, just things to think about, we need to always be on the lookout for forces that are looking to divide, that are going to divide our family.

And so family togetherness requires constant adjustments. There's going to be seasons of life where we get into a rut. There are distractions in the life. Sometimes it's just the cares of this world.

And things get out of whack and disarray. And the habits that we had, maybe you're gone. And we just need to make those adjustments. Make those adjustments towards the vision that we have for our family relationships.

[25 : 14] And I'm going to finish up with this, speaking to each group in the family. So first I'm going to speak to fathers and husbands.

You are the leader of the family. Whether it's just a husband and a wife or a bunch of kids in tow as well. You are the leader.

And it is your responsibility to create that culture and to cast that vision for how you want your family to be. So I'm going to encourage you tonight to take that responsibility.

Cast the vision. Family unity does not happen by itself. And it's up to you to create the plan, to build the habits, and to execute on those plans.

And by the way, just one little pro tip as you're kind of creating plans and organizing your family and how your family does things. Relationships require margin in your life.

[26 : 20] You know what I mean by that? If you are busy, every second of your day is booked solid. It's really hard to relate to one another.

Now you can book. Some people are micromanagers, right? They like to schedule everything. And so you can schedule time for relationships. And that's totally legitimate. But for us, our family at least, we intentionally create margin in our family so that we're not out doing activities every single night of the week.

We have time where we can spend together. Just sometimes not doing anything. Just hanging out. Nothing particular scheduled. Just hanging out.

But let me go on. So that was husbands, fathers. Next is mothers and wives. You are the implementers. Now you also can be a part of casting the vision or at least being a part of working the vision.

Talking with your husband. Figuring out how are we going to do this? What are our objectives? What's our vision for how we're going to do things with our family? But typically mom is the one that's at home implementing these things day in and day out.

[27 : 31] So use your creativity. Think of creative ways to implement the big picture vision to foster close loving relationships at home. And then the next I'm going to go to is the siblings.

Siblings, you know, you can take ownership of yourself. Are you contributing to that family togetherness? Are you looking for opportunities to kind of do things on your own?

Kind of, you know, my little brother or sister, they want to play but they're not as fun as the bigger kids or things like that.

You know, your four-year-old little sister wants to play Candyland. And Candyland is not as exciting as other things.

But hey, I can take this as an opportunity to build a relationship with my little sister. And what a joy and what an opportunity. And maybe it doesn't seem like there's a lot of value there but there is.

[28 : 34] And relationships are like that, right? You don't see the value right then and there. But as you build relationships over time and you look back, you see that you've built something amazing.

And I'll finish with this. Optimize your life and your family and your relationships for joy.

The Bible says, this is in Romans 14, 17, for the kingdom of God is not about eating or drinking. It's not about religious rituals. But it's about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice in the Lord, the Bible says. We are to take joy in the Lord because of his love for us. And we can take joy in each other. Of all the overwhelming responsibilities that we have in running a family, don't forget the most important thing, which is to enjoy each other every single day.

And if you enjoy them, they will enjoy you. Husbands and wives can learn to enjoy one another. Parents enjoying their children. Brothers and sisters enjoying one another.

[29 : 52] And to me, when I see brothers and sisters, parents and children, and they laugh together, and they like spending time with one another, to me, I look at that and I see that is a successful family.

Play games. Play games. Tell jokes. Play games. Tell jokes. Debate ideas. Read books aloud. Learn new things together. Collaborate on projects.

And even when there's trials and pain and heartache, even through those things, we can experience that joy that God has for us and for our families just like he intended.

Amen? Amen. All right, let's close with a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the idea of families that you created.

It's just so tremendous. The relationship that we have with you, we are part of your family because that's what you wanted. And then you gave us these families, moms, dads, brothers, sisters.

[30 : 55] It's just incredible. And we ask that you would work in our hearts and our families to have healthy relationships, thriving relationships, just as you intended.

We thank you for all that you've done to give us the things that we need so that we can have healthy relationships with you and healthy relationships with each other because of your sacrifice on our behalf.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. All right. Thanks, everybody.