Family Dinner

WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING TO THE TABLE?

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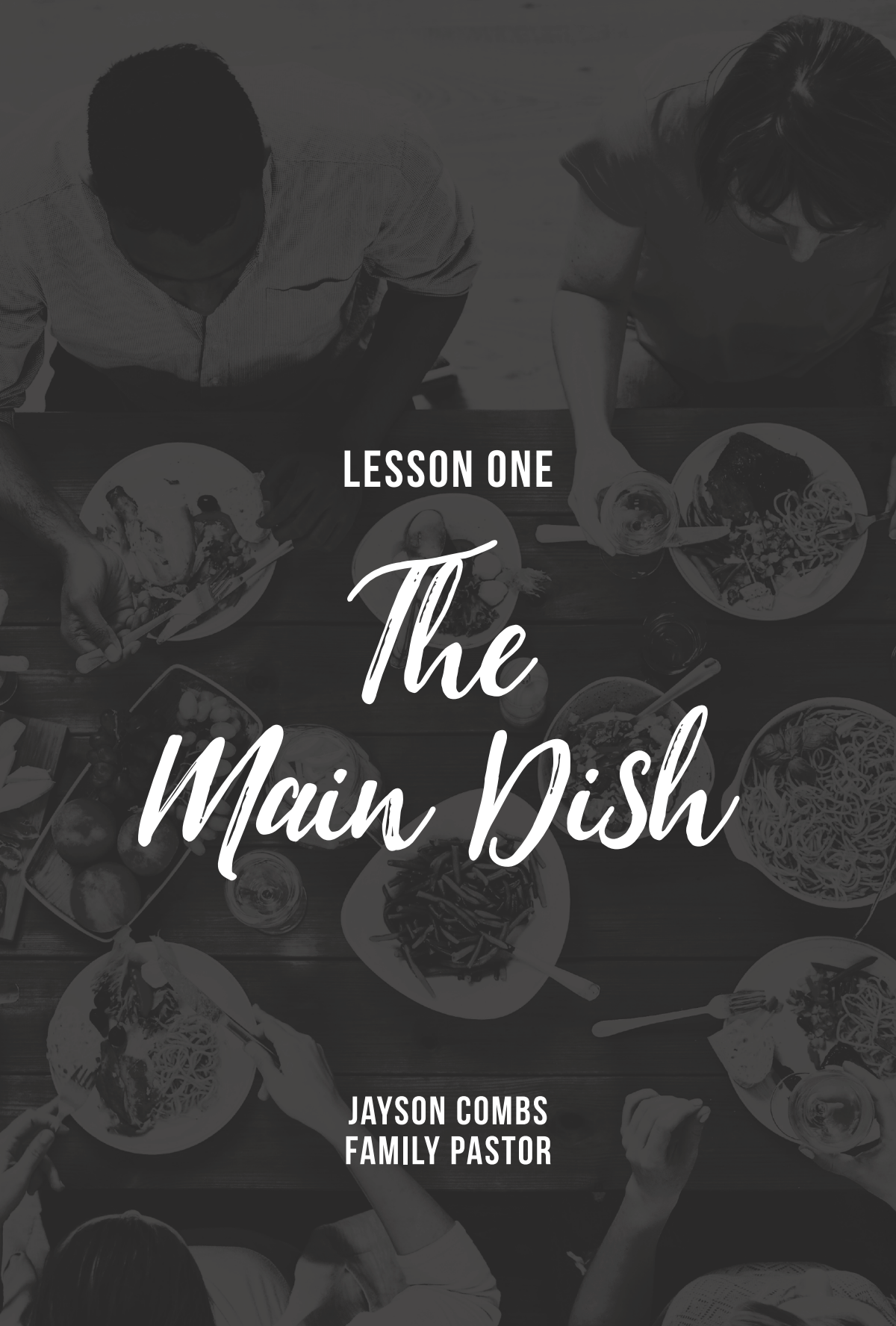
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PREFACE

The statement “Family Dinner” can bring up many different emotions in people. Some remember a time where the family gathered around a table to eat a meal and discuss the day. Others may think of chaos, just hoping some sort of food will get distributed to the family. It really is a microcosm of the family today. The family can be both chaos and comfort. In this book, *“Family Dinner”* we discuss how important it is for the family to be centered around the Lord. The book starts with the “main dish” being Jesus Christ. From there it discusses the need for “more than baby food,” and the maturity that God has called us to. The main focus is to challenge families to function as God has planned, and discover the ways we can grow into the family that God has purposed for us.

Lesson One | The Main Dish - What is the family centered around?
Lesson Two | More Than Baby Food - We need to mature in the Lord.
Lesson Three | The Dishes - How to do family together.
Lesson Four | Leftovers - How to deal with the hurts of the past.



LESSON ONE

The Main Dish

JAYSON COMBS
FAMILY PASTOR

If you could go out on the perfect food date, where would it be?

Expensive sit down restaurant
Spouse cooks the meal
Picnic
Cheap and quick (Taco Bell)
Food Truck
Other _____

Dinners are just not the same. For most of my childhood, I was the only child in the home. My wife would say I was a little spoiled. I would just say I was extra loved. Either way, I always remember my mother making us a big dinner. We would never have a meal with one side and the main dish. When I first got married, I remember my wife (who is a wonderful cook) brought the main dish with only one side. I was thoroughly confused. Meals always need sides, plural. My wife and I have also debated on what signifies something to be the main dish? Now, these were never big deals in our marriage. I really laugh about it now. However, it is amazing how dinner can look so different.

What signifies something to be a main dish?

_____
_____
_____

Luke 10:38-42 says, ***"Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha,***

Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.'"

In this passage how was Jesus' teaching counter cultural?

_____

_____

_____

Is Martha doing a wrong thing?

_____

_____

_____

Romans 12:13 says, ***"Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."***

Hebrews 13:2 adds, ***"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."***

If hospitality is required by us, why do you think she was rebuked?

_____

_____

_____

Jesus told Martha she was "worried and bothered about so many things."

Deuteronomy 8:3 says, ***"And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."***

How did Martha miss the main meal? What was the main dish?

_____

_____

_____

What was the "main dish," for Paul in Philippians 3:13-14, ***"Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus?"***

_____

_____

_____

What was the "main dish," for David in Psalms 27:4,***"One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple?"***

_____

_____

_____

What would be your definition of what it looks like for God to be the main dish in your family?

_____

_____

_____

Are there side dishes in your family that are good side dishes but are distracting you from the main dish?

_____

_____

_____

Are there side dishes with your family that are poisonous and need to be removed?

_____

_____

_____

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, ***"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."***

What are things that you can do in your family to help you focus on the main dish?

_____

_____

_____

"The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot."
Psalm 16:5





SIDES

MAIN DISH, DEVOTION 1

Kyle Wendel | *Children & Student's Director*

Everyone loves a good side to complement their dinner. What are your favorite sides? There are so many from which to choose. There are soups, salad, vegetables, rice, fruit, and loaves of bread. Personally, I love any kind of bread. Instead of having a salad with dinner, I would rather take a double or triple serving of rolls. Rolls of any kind trump all sides. Have you ever had so many rolls or sides that you were full before you even got to the main dish? I know I have. Then there is the moment where you eat about two bites of the main dish and you are done.

I think we do this too often spiritually as well. Too often we get so caught up in the sides of this life and not the main dish. Jesus is our main dish. He should be our main focus. However, we fill ourselves with the things of this world, and by the time we come to the main dish, Jesus, we are full. We have no room left. We spend so much time on everything else that we have left no time for Jesus.

Sides, in a sense, do not have the same amount of nutrients that you need that the main dish does. Spiritually it is the same. There is nothing this world can give you that will give you even close to the same amount of spiritual nutrients that Jesus can. So why do we spend so much time on the sides of this world and not Jesus?

In 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul says, ***"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful."*** Paul says that things in this world can be okay for us to do. It is okay to love sports, it is okay to love your job, and it is okay to enjoy these things. However, that does not mean that everything is good for you. I love sports, but sports

cannot become the main dish in my life. I will not be filling myself with the nutrients I truly need. We need to be filled spiritually with Christ alone. We cannot fill that void with other sides. We will always be trying to get the nutrients we need from Jesus from these other sides, and we will never get them. It is okay to enjoy these things, but if they take the place of the main dish, we will be in trouble.

Colossians 3:1-2 says, ***"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."***

Colossians 3:17 adds, ***"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."***

Colossians chapter 3 tells us to seek the things that are above. If we seek the things of God, we are seeking what is truly helpful to us. We should focus on Jesus through everything. Our sides should always be pointing and complementing our main dish. Do not try to mix sides that do not go with Christ. Keep your minds set on Him and His truth, love, and grace. Do not try to make something the main dish that should never be in His place. God needs to be the number one priority and thought in our lives daily. If that happens, we will be filling ourselves up with the spiritual nutrients that come from God alone.

What are some things that you put in place of God in your life?

How can you make sure to keep that from happening?

How can you keep Jesus as your main dish?

CUPS

MAIN DISH, DEVOTION 2

Mark O'Connor | *Student Director*

Dishwashers are great. It is nice just to put a dish or cup in the machine and walk away and not think of it. You go back, take it out, and put it in the cupboard. When you are thirsty, just grab a cup and repeat. Sometimes though, you go get that cup, fill it with some nice cool water, and go to take a drink; however, you are dismayed to find the cup full of nasty floating grossness. It looked so clean on the outside. However, you look on the inside, and it is full of crumbs and crusties.

Somebody clearly did not rinse it out and look on the inside before putting it in the dishwasher. That is a thing that needs to happen. The dishwasher is not going to clean everything itself; it needs some help. You need to clean the inside of the glass too. It may look good on the outside, but unless all the grime is out of the inside, it cannot be used for which it was made.

You need some help; you cannot do it yourself. By the way, I am not referring to the inside of the glass anymore, and I want to focus on the inside of you. Matthew 23:25-28 says, ***"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."*** Jesus spent quite a bit of time speaking to the religious hypocrisy of the day.

As parents, your kids are going to watch for hypocrisy in your life. You can only be fake for so long. If you are not working on holiness and cleanliness in the parts of your life that no one sees, it is just a matter of time before it is shown to the world and our families are usually the first to see and experience it. That is when disaster strikes. That is when families become fractured and even broken. Make sure you are not so focused on making sure everything looks good, that you forget actually to make it good. Work now, it is never too late to start letting God work on cleaning out the mess you have made of your life. However, while it is never too late for our salvation and growth, sometimes the breaks and bruises take far longer to heal if not addressed in a timely manner.

WATER

MAIN DISH, DEVOTION 3

Katrina Young | *Assistant to the Family Pastor*

"Drink more water!" Yes, I rolled my eyes as I wrote this! I wish I had a dollar for every time I was given that advice. If you do a Google search, you will find all of the benefits of drinking a lot of water. It is surprising that we have to be reminded. Why would you not want to: Lose weight, have better-looking skin, increased energy, and have an improved immune system. The first thing that comes to you at a restaurant, sometimes even before you get a menu, is water. The truth is our bodies can survive for a very long period of time without food, but only a short time without water. Yet, if you are like me, when given a choice, I order the diet Coke, and I leave the restaurant with the water untouched. The substitution seems refreshing, but it does not give the same results.

If you read John 4:13-17, you will see the story of the women at the well. The woman traveled a long way with her vessel to draw water from the well. She met Jesus, and in her conversation, she admitted that she had many husbands. The woman was trying to quench her thirst with worldly desires, and it was only after her experience with Jesus that she realized His truth and that He was the fulfillment of what she desired. Jesus was saying to her when you accept me; you will have a well of fresh living water to draw from within yourself. John 4:14 says, ***"But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*** When she understood, she left the empty vessel that she had carried, went back to her town to share what she had experienced, and that she believed.

In our daily lives, are we acting the same as the women at the well by trying to fill a void with things that do not matter only to be left feeling empty? Ecclesiastics 3:11 says that "God set eternity in the heart of man." I love how the Amplified Bible puts this verse, ***"He has also planted eternity [a sense of divine purpose] in the human heart [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun can satisfy, except God]."*** Jesus is the only one that can fill that void!

I read in a devotion not long ago, "Jesus is not a gate-crasher. He only enters the areas of your life into which He is invited." Are you inviting Him to sit at the table with you and your family? When you sit, which well is your water being drawn from? Is your family hydrated or are they leaving the table thirsting? Serve them water, but do not forget to serve the "Living Water."

BREAD

MAIN DISH, DEVOTION 4

Danielle Hardenburg

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'" John 6:35

Raise your hand if you are that person out to eat who might say, "Okay, where is the bread basket, when is it coming, and what is the ETA?" I come from a long line of cornbread and buttermilk biscuit consumers, so I come by that thought process pretty naturally. Believe me, I tried living Keto and just could not cut it. We are Carbo vs. Keto in my family. To be very honest, I bake banana bread almost weekly for my kids, and at dinner, they are looking around for the slice of cornbread, garlic bread, or even a good old fashion Pillsbury can I smacked open to accompany our meal. I have seen three growing boys crush some Pillsbury. By the way, one of my sons is sustained entirely by peanut butter and jelly sandwiches alone. Bread? Yes, please.

In the book of John, we read how Jesus performed miracles for many. He provided physical needs and loved people right where they were in life, a mess. He also said things in the book of John that were hard to grasp. He spoke of a rebirth, water that ends thirst, and a living bread that came from Heaven that you could eat and never die. In response to these statements from Jesus, you often see how immediately the audience is confounded or straight conflicted because they regard His words in the physical sense. Immediately, the response is, "How can this be?" "How can I get these things and gain these benefits?" "This guy is talking crazy, and I cannot accept this." I personally can see how confusion could come with

His words. I also see how we are so caught up in the here and now. Recently while evaluating my prayer life, I noticed how often my prayer was for physical things: health, supply, safety, strength, and stewardship.

The Holy Spirit has shown me times I have been blinded by the "here and now" mindset and where it can narrow my prayers. I personally have seen how I often focus on physical needs and how I can lose my regard that Jesus came to give us eternal life apart from this world. I know I can pray boldly for earthly things, but I also have to remember that this life I have, is the icing on the cake. Jesus battled death and came to sustain my soul for eternity. The only bread that satisfies our inherent spiritual hunger came from Heaven so we could know our Creator. If I pray in remembrance that Jesus came to save our souls eternally, my eyes open up a bit and the needs of this world shift into prayers of thankfulness. Daily I see so many physical needs all around me, and I continue to lift them up earnestly in prayer yet I have confidence that the One who came to give us eternity with God can use me to provide what is needed in this world. I challenge you and your family to read the book of John, focus on where Jesus speaks and reach out to someone to fill a physical need in your neighborhood.

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." John 6:51

DESSERT

MAIN DISH, DEVOTION 5

James Clouse

Is there a dessert that you absolutely love? Alright, I have a weird quirk to share with everybody. Are you ready? I cannot stand soggy bread. Anything that gets soggy, that is any type of bread like substance, is avoided. I have to eat my cereal super fast so that it does not get soggy. I do not like stuffing during the Thanksgiving season (Gag me with a spoon). It goes so far as me having to ask for a second plate at restaurants when I get a burger so that the sweat under the burger does not make my bun soggy. I know many of you are reading this and thinking that I am so weird, but I know that others are shaking their heads saying that you understand what I am saying. One of my favorite desserts is strawberry shortcake. However, the problem lies in that I need to finish it within minutes of putting my strawberry topping on the shortbread. If I do not, it goes bad in my eyes.

There are blessings from the Father that we often misuse or let go bad. One of these things is often our family. Let us all take a close look at how often we are looking down at our phones or the game on the television when our children or spouse are trying to get our attention. I know, I do it too. We need to take advantage of the blessing that God has given us.

God also provided a blessing, a dessert, to the Israelites in the time of the Exodus.

Exodus 16:4 says, ***"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I am going to rain bread from Heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may***

test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.'" Another translation (CSB) says at the end of the verse, ***"Whether or not they will follow my instructions."***

Manna is a dessert like substance that is said to be described as a honey-like wafer. God gave the Israelites food from Heaven, and they were only supposed to take what they could eat that day. Unfortunately, many did not listen and took extra, and it ended up molding and collecting worms.

We have instructions from the Lord in His Word for how we are supposed to cherish our families. However, many of us continue to disobey and not listen to His instruction. We do not take advantage of the time that we have with our family, and we wonder why the family idea is rotting.

God has commanded wives to respect their husbands. In what ways do you continue to disrespect your husband on a daily basis? How often do you disrespect the authority that God has placed over your family? Husbands, we are commanded to love our wives as much as Christ loved the Church. This is an immeasurable amount of love! However, how often do you show love more towards your things or towards other people, even ministry, and not your wife and family? Families, let us not let our families spoil.

SEASONING

MAIN DISH, DEVOTION 6

Michelle Moshier | *Nursery & Pre-K Director*

I am sure all of us reading this has some type of cooking experience whether we have smelled or garnished with certain seasonings like sweet (mint) or even bitter (turmeric). I know when I first started cooking, I always wondered how is this going to change or help my recipe let alone make it look or taste better? Life, in general, is constantly changing, especially when you add family to the mixing bowl. Some are in seasons of having no children, some with children, and some losing children.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, ***"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*** God always has that bigger view of what He has planned for each one of us that we just cannot see. Just like in the Pixar movie "Ratatouille" when the mouse keeps adding all the seasonings to the dish without the chef knowing. Then eventually he learns the mouse was there all along helping. It is just like Jesus, who gives us the perfect ingredients to share with others to make the perfect dish.

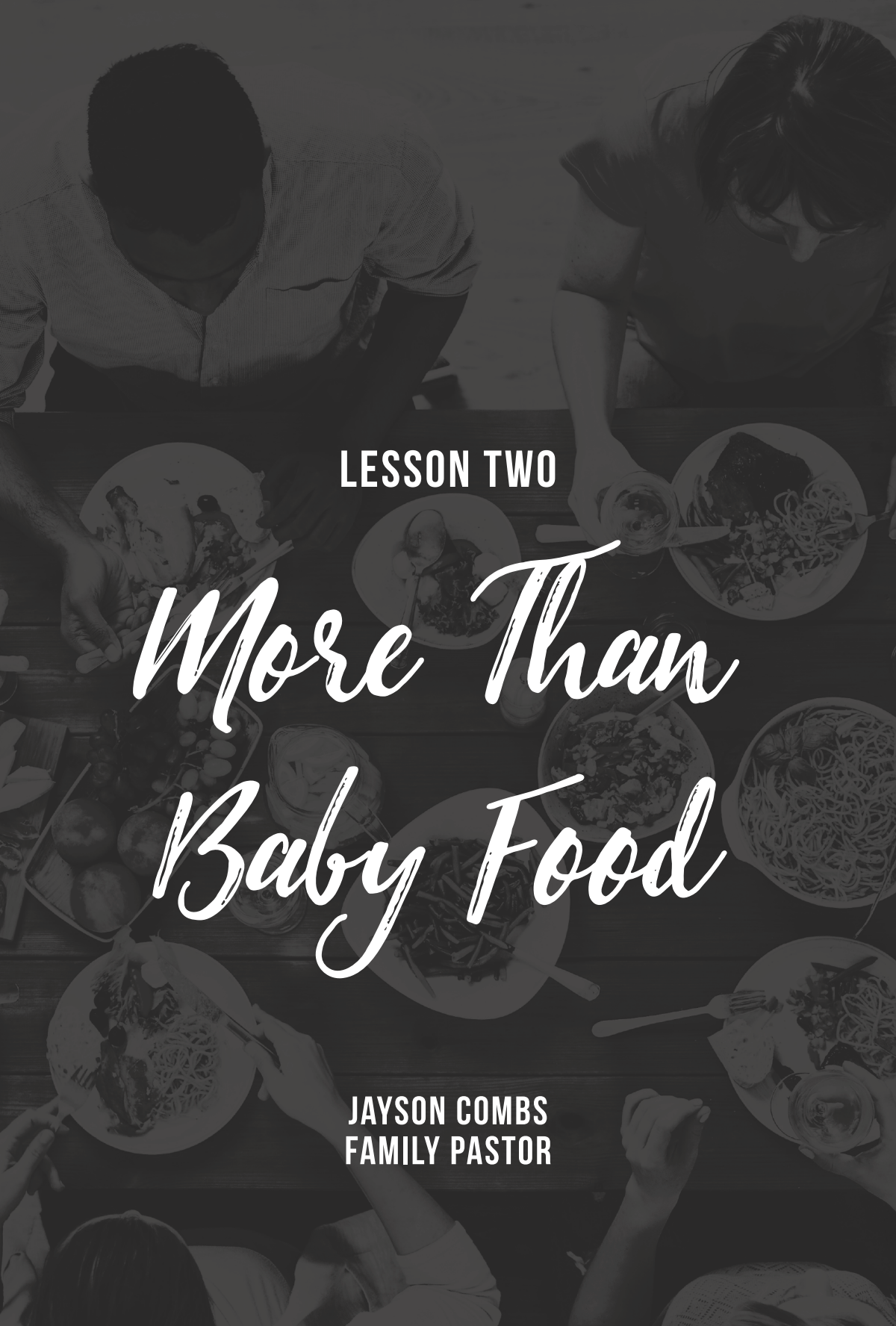
I think of this scenario. Before you cook your main dish, there is a preparation that takes place. It is important for you to use a proper amount of seasonings during this time. Now you are probably asking yourself how is this the same with family? Each of us goes through different moments of hurt and joy in our lives (Mint and Turmeric). We are told in Galatians 6:2, ***"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."*** In order to be able to share and walk through burdens with one another, I believe we must have some type of compassion and understanding. For example, as a parent, I am

constantly watching my children make mistakes that I see coming a mile away because, as that old saying goes, "I've been there and done that." Even though I shared my experiences with my children in order to keep them from making the same mistakes from my past, they often do them too. I was there just to hold them through the hurt and consequences that eventually had to take place. I was praying for them and with them. When I had no words to speak, I was allowing Jesus to speak through me. I strived to be kind when I felt I could not find one nice thing to say at the time. I was finding peace when there just did not seem as though there was any.

Would you agree we are to help season our family? Maybe you are asking, "How do I season my family?" This can be found in Galatians 5:22-23, ***"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."***

Be sure to use all your seasonings.





LESSON TWO

More Than Baby Food

JAYSON COMBS
FAMILY PASTOR

What is the one food that you loved as a kid that now is completely disgusting?

_____
_____
_____

Why do you think that is?

_____
_____
_____

My wife is an extraordinary pianist. She has spent countless hours working on her craft. In college, she would get up every morning and practice for three to four hours. I say this all to say she knows her stuff when it comes to the piano. My son is a crazy nine-year-old. He has just started his weekly piano lessons with his mother. To say there are fireworks sometimes is an understatement. Sometimes my son gets this thought in his head that he knows better than mom about piano – things like how to sit and how to hold his hands. When Laura explains how to do it, there have been times when my son will purposely try to mess up and then tell his mom, "See, it does not work."

Today, we are going to study about maturity in the family. I am scared that there are many of us who look at God's ways for family, we tell Him that our ways are better, and He really does not know what He is talking about. Maturity is being able to take a good look at ourselves and to really see where we are at. Maturity is being able to learn and take steps to be more like Jesus.

Is there anything that sticks out when you were younger that you thought you had maturity but now realize you were a long way off?

_____

_____

_____

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:20, ***"Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature."***

Do you have a mature parent figure in your life? What would you say sets them apart as being mature?

_____

_____

_____

Fill in the box with as many things as you can that describe what mature parents look like.

Do the same for a mature spouse.

What do you think ***"be infants in evil"*** means?

_____
_____
_____

Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, ***"But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, or you are still of the flesh. For a while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?"***

What descriptions do we find in this passage that help us understand what lack of maturity means?

_____
_____
_____

Paul also said, ***"Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love"*** (1 Corinthians 16:13-14). At the end of the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul gives a final command that really helps us understand the entire book. Here are five commands that can help us in our maturity in our family.

1. Be Alert

Mark 14:38 says, ***"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."***

Ephesians 6:18 (NIV) adds, ***"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."***

After reading these verses, what goes hand in hand with being alert?

_____
_____
_____

What do you think it means to be alert in your family?

_____
_____
_____

What does failing to be alert look like?

_____
_____
_____

2. Be Firm in the Faith

Ephesians 4:14 says, ***"So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."***

As a parent, what does being "firm in the faith" look like to your child?

_____
_____
_____

Do you have a person in your live that is firm in their faith?

_____
_____
_____

How has that been helpful?

_____
_____
_____

3. Be Mature - Act like Adults

John MacArthur says, "Adults have a sense of control confidence and courage that the immature or childish person does not have."

Do you ever find yourself acting like a child?

_____
_____
_____

What steps can you take to break that habit?

_____
_____
_____

4. Be Strong

Ephesians 6:10 reminds us, ***"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."***

What does strength look like in the family?

_____
_____
_____

5. Let All that You Do be Done in Love

Wycliffe says the Greek word here for love is in "the present tense, expressing actions that are to be continuous."

Peter commands, ***"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins"*** (1 Peter 4:8).

Why and how does love keep everything else in line?

_____
_____
_____

If you had to rank yourself in each of these commands, which would you consider your strength and which would need more work?

_____
_____
_____





BABY TALK

MORE THAN BABY FOOD, DEVOTION 1

Tommy Youngquist | *Children's Pastor*

Is it not crazy how a parent can understand their toddler's jargon, but no one else can? For example, my Heidi, had some coin phrases when she was two. They consisted of:

1. "Sarugo Daddy" = "There you go, Daddy."
2. "Do do's go nite nite" = "It's dark outside now, and the birds have gone to sleep."
3. "That's bebah!" = "That's better!"

The difference that has happened in her speech between the ages of two and three is something special. She speaks so clearly now that pretty much anyone can understand what she is trying to articulate.

Paul states in 1 Corinthians 13:11, ***"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways."***

What if Heidi grew up and still referred to night time as, "Do do's go nite nite?" I can hear the thoughts you think as you read this. That would be my thoughts exactly. It would be weird! What if she never practiced her words? We expect children to be able to articulate their words more clearly as they practice and use them.

Paul is using this principle to illustrate how we learn to communicate love. Specifically, it is how we communicate the love of God. Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians, is known as the "love" chapter. In verse four the Bible states, ***"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude."***

You probably know the verses. You have heard them at every wedding you have attended. In this chapter, biblical love is spelled out and defined for all the world. At the beginning of the chapter, Paul says you could have all the knowledge and skill in the world, but if you say and do things without love, you are just background noise.

As we grow up (mature) in our Christian lives, we must learn how to effectively and clearly communicate the love of God. We must give up our childish, selfish communication of love and grow into a sacrificial expression of love. How do you do that? The key is practice. Consciously catch yourself when you are selfish, repent, and switch on the spot to sacrificial love. The more and more you do this in your day to day life, the more habitual, biblical love will become.

BABY THOUGHTS

MORE THAN BABY FOOD, DEVOTION 2

Tommy Youngquist | *Children's Pastor*

Have you ever wondered what a baby dreams about? I have. There is no telling what goes on inside their head and what they think about. What are even the possibilities? Are they swinging in a giant baby swing? Maybe they are being held by grandma, but grandpa's face is really on grandma's body? Are they discovering they are covered in poop? Oh wait, that is a reality! Any parent out there knows this to be fact. Today, we are going to discuss the same Scripture that we did yesterday, 1 Corinthians 13:11, but from a different perspective.

"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways."

Can we all agree that children and adults think differently? Our dreams are different than their dreams. The goals and systems for accomplishing those goals are different between the two. Problems that seem so monumental as a child pales in comparison to the problems you face as an adult. Our thought process matures, and that process starts to embrace life as it truly is. The same maturation process should occur in our spiritual lives. When you have that moment of belief and acceptance in Jesus and what He did for humanity, specifically you, you start the process of change. The change does not happen overnight; it takes time. It primarily occurs from discovering God's guidelines and rules in the Bible.

For example, Scripture tells us in Hebrews 6:1-3, ***"Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity,***

not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits."

What on Earth is this verse saying? Mature yourself spiritually by going deeper into God's Word. Find out what lies beyond your redemption and find out how you can help others become redeemed. Put away childish, "all about me," selfish thoughts and start considering the needs of others. This is what true love is. This is God's hope for your life that you will learn to love as He loves. He wants you to reciprocate His love and then show that love to others. Put away childish thoughts. Those are the thoughts that only consider your wants and needs. Mature, and start thinking in a way that is unselfish.

BABY REASONING

MORE THAN BABY FOOD, DEVOTION 3

Tommy Youngquist | *Children's Pastor*

It is incredible the change that happens in children when they start to realize there is wrong and right. You can see the hesitation in my daughter when she is about to do something that she knows is wrong. Heidi will try and be real sneaky, she will look left and right to make sure mommy or daddy are not watching, and she will contemplate whether or not she can get away with it. I have watched this contemplation process. It is comical to me. But it also has taught me an important lesson: Left or right does not matter; up matters.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:11, ***"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways."***

When I read that phrase ***"reasoned like a child,"*** I thought of that left or right illustration. Children reason or contemplate based on the reward or punishment of their parents. They want to know if they are going to get caught if they do something wrong. On the other hand, they want to know what reward awaits them if they do something right. As we mature in our spiritual lives, this left or right reasoning should start to change. We should not care so much who knows what we do to the right or the left, but up. Ultimately, what God thinks of us is what should matter most.

The best example of this is Joseph in Genesis chapter 39. Joseph has been put in charge of Potiphar's house because he trusts him and in verses 6-9, Scripture says, ***"Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time, his master's wife cast***

her eyes on Joseph and said, 'Lie with me.' But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Behold, because of me, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?'"

Lives would change if we could be a people that care more about what God thinks of us than others. Do not reason and contemplate like a child — reason like an adult, but more importantly, reason like a Christian. Look up; left and right is not as important.

BABY DIET

MORE THAN BABY FOOD, DEVOTION 4

Tommy Youngquist | *Children's Pastor*

All week long, we have been using 1 Corinthians 13:11 to illustrate spiritual progression in our lives. We are going to switch gears today and turn to a very well-known Scripture concerning spiritual maturity.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, ***"But I, brothers [and sisters], could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?"***

When my daughter Heidi was about 6 months old, she started eyeing everything that Ashley and I ate. It was hilarious. Her eyes would follow the food on our forks from plate to mouth. We got excited about the prospect of feeding Heidi solid food, so we started the transition from milk to real food. Every time we sat down for dinner, we would give her little bits and pieces of whatever we were eating, and Heidi loved it! It was great until she could not go number two anymore. Our poor baby went ten days one time without defecating. She was miserable! It got so bad we had to use an enema on her as she writhed in pain. We felt like the world's worst parents. She was not ready for solid food. We will not be making the same mistake with Uriah when he starts ogling the dinner goods.

Unfortunately, most Christians are in the same spot spiritually speaking that Heidi was in physically. They are not ready for the

transition from milk to meat. They are not mature enough in their spiritual lives to digest deep, theological issues found in God's Word. They are not mature enough for God to trust them with spiritual responsibility. Why? We again find the answer in our 1 Corinthians passage, ***"And even now you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?"***

Why are most Christians not ready? It is because they are still consumed with everything this world has to offer instead of what the next world offers. They care more about the big house, cars, clothes, and money than the things of God. They are jealous of everyone who has what they do not have. Because of that jealousy, their life is filled with strife. It is time to grow up and get ready for solid food. God wants so badly to start feeding you the good stuff, but you have to be ready. You get ready by changing your focus from earthly to eternal. When you do that, get ready and open wide because here comes the airplane.

BABY STRENGTH

MORE THAN BABY FOOD, DEVOTION 5

Mark O'Connor | *Student Director*

I remember the day my first son was born. I will spare you some of the details of the day, although it can be a pretty entertaining story and fast forward to after he was born. We were in a hospital room at North Oakland Medical Center. There I was sitting in a rocking chair holding this floppy little baby. I had never been nervous about holding babies; I loved it. This one was a little different. I was responsible for it for a considerably longer time than a couple of hours of babysitting. Everybody kept telling me to be careful with his head because he was not strong yet. I was keenly aware of that.

What I was not keenly aware of was how short a time that statement would be true of our future strong man. It took him some time to start to walk, but it did not take him long after that to realize the brute force of his strength. We went through many different contraptions to keep doors and drawers closed and childproofed. There were not many at the time that a little force could not handle. I recall watching Nate look at a set of cabinet doors with a zip-tie like device on it. He studied it for a minute, grabbed the door and threw himself back with all his might, snapping the zip ties with ease. That was our life.

Kids move on from that weak phase very quickly most of the time. Once a baby figures out how strong they are, they continually test that and grow. To be honest, it can be way faster than we would like sometimes. Yet they grow.

Why do Christians not work the same way? Paul tells us in Ephesians to no longer be like children. Ephesians 4:14 (NLT) says, ***"Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed***

and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth."

I typically do not teach from the NLT, but I really like the way it words this. We will no longer be immature. We have some very immature adults in the midst of the Church in America. There needs to be a longing in your life to grow in your relationship with Jesus. We talk about that all the time. There also needs to be a growing of maturity in your understanding of who God is and what the Bible says.

This "Sunday only" thing does not cut it anymore. We ask why things in our lives stay the same and grow stagnant. We wonder why we do not see the blessing that others see. There is a process that takes place when you fully immerse yourself in Scripture, not just to read it but to understand it. When you invest in this growth, you will begin to see what the life of a mature follower of Jesus looks like. The storms will still come. The wind will still blow. When it happens though, you will be ready. You will be equipped. You will be strong enough to bear it only because you let Jesus stand before you and take the brunt of it.

BABY NAPPING

MORE THAN BABY FOOD, DEVOTION 6

Tommy Youngquist | *Children's Pastor*

I will never forget the second night I spent with our daughter, Heidi. Ashley was a new, 24-hour old mother and she was exhausted. I, being an incredible husband and father (yeah right), offered to take Heidi out of the room so Ashley could get some uninterrupted sleep. After all, how hard could this whole dad thing be, right? I proceeded to take Heidi to the NICU waiting room on the 5th floor of St. Joseph Hospital. Everything was great! The Pistons replay was on *Fox Sports Detroit.* Heidi was quiet. However, then it happened. Heidi started to cry. Her cry eventually became a wail. She was inconsolable. Nurses would pass by the waiting room, feel sorry for me, and offer help, but nothing worked. Her incessant crying continued for four hours. It was horrible. I will never forget the feelings of frustration, anxiety, and utter panic.

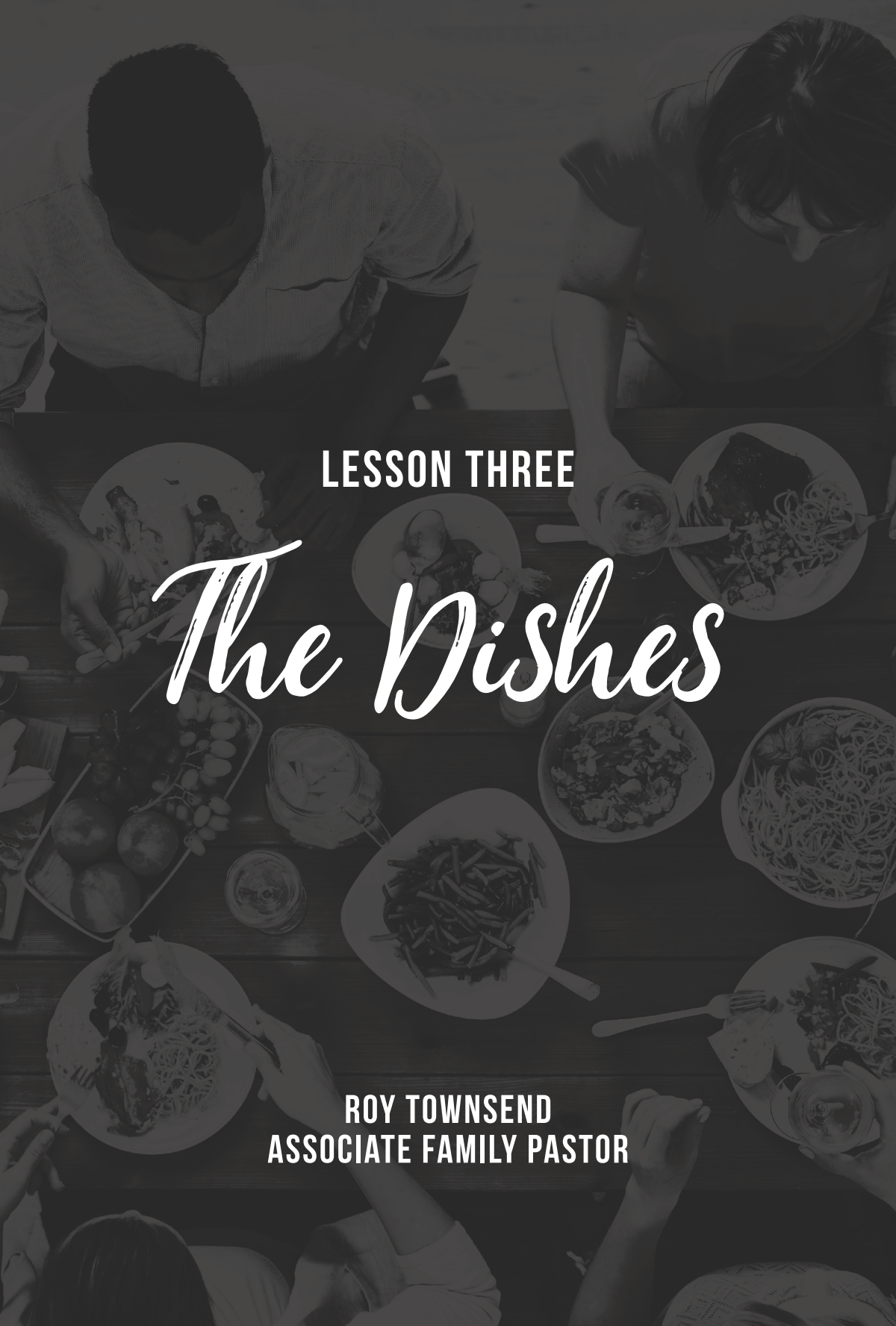
Despite the crying, that moment bonded my daughter and me. I remember thinking to myself that no matter how frustrated I was with her, my love for her would always outweigh any negative feelings I have toward her. I felt a change happening in my mind. The change was so deep that I started to feel it in my soul. This little girl could never do anything that would weaken the love I had for her. She eventually learned how to sleep. Before too long, she was sleeping through the night. She was, how the old saying goes, sleeping like a baby.

You can sleep like a baby too. You can be at peace. Nothing you do separates you from the love of God. So many times, we live our lives substantiated by this formula: Who I Am = What I Do.

This formula is false. It is a lie straight from the mouth of Satan and the pit of Hell. The Bible says in John 13:34, ***"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."***

So how has Christ loved you? He values you for your inherent worth and offers grace freely to you without exception. God knows the real truth about you - that you were created in His image - and that truth allows Him to separate your person from your performance. He loves despite the things you do. I do not know about you, but that motivates me to want to love Him more and more. It motivates me enough to ***"put off childish ways"*** and love people as He does. How about you? Will you respond the same way?





LESSON THREE

The Dishes

ROY TOWNSEND
ASSOCIATE FAMILY PASTOR

The kitchen table was an important space in my family home when I was a child. That was a place where we talked, did our homework, played cards, and competed at games; but most importantly, it is where we ate meals. I can still see the kitchen table full of food in my mind. There would be some tasty home cooking on that table. Some of my favorite memories surround biscuits, milk gravy, fried apples, fried green tomatoes, cornbread, and bacon. As wonderful as that table would look with all that food, the stove, counters, and sink would be a mess. All sorts of pots, pans, bowls, and utensils would lay dirty all over the place, and the sink was only going to get more dishes thrown in on top of everything else. Certain dishes had to be cleaned when they were still warm because to hand clean a gravy skillet after it is cold is not much fun. Cleaning up the mess after a wonderful meal is just as important as getting the food, preparing the food, and serving the food.

Who did the dishes in your family when you were growing up? Who does them now?

_____
_____
_____

Who prepared the family meals when you were a child? Who does them now?

_____
_____
_____

Do you think it is important to sit at the table today? How often do you sit at the table with someone else?

_____
_____
_____

Everyone wants the perfect meal, but few of us or our children want to help clean-up the dinner. Parents, we are called to lead our family by training or "bringing-up" our children spiritually and messaging the importance of Christ in their lives. Deuteronomy 6:5-9 commands, ***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."***

Being together as a family seems important in this Scripture. Can we promote this message if we are not together? What is getting in the way of the family being together?

_____
_____
_____

Ephesians 6:1-4 reads, ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."***

People want to have a wonderful meal without putting the kitchen back in order. Both the children and parents are given some work in this Scripture. It may be time to do the dishes.

How are children to treat their parents? Why?

_____
_____
_____

Who is responsible for setting the pattern of obedience in their children's lives?

_____
_____
_____

Why is there a warning about over-disciplining children?

_____
_____
_____

What does ***"bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"*** mean? What does this look like in your family?

_____
_____
_____

Proverbs 13:24 reads, ***"Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him."*** Proverbs 22:15 adds, ***"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him."***

There is a warning here about under-disciplining children, too. What is it and why?

_____
_____
_____

Colossians 3:20 reads, ***"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."***

What pleases the Lord?

_____
_____
_____

Proverbs 22:6 challenges us, ***"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."***

When should we train our children?

_____
_____
_____

Why should we train our children?

_____
_____
_____

We pray that your family considers how to spend more time together for teaching and training for His glory. It is more fun to do the dishes together.





PRAYING TOGETHER

DOING THE DISHES, DEVOTION 1

Justin Dean | *Student Director*

One of my favorite memories growing up are some of the times spent at the dinner table. There were so many laughs, jokes, and my mom's amazing food. However, honestly one of the things that drew my family the closest was not my mom's spaghetti; it was our prayer time together. My mom came up with an amazing idea for our family to pray through the church directory. We would pick a family each night and pray for them by name. There is something about prayer that aligns our focus as people when we do it together. It is one of the major reasons Paul puts a huge emphasis on prayer together in his letters to the church. We see that in Colossians 4:2, ***"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."***

As your family goes about their day, they all experience different things throughout the course of that day. As you come back together and seek to unify yourself, prayer refocuses your mind and sets a direction for your family. It ties you together and unifies your desires to grow as a family in a certain direction. Whether it is praying for other families, praying for the current tragedies in our world, or praying for the struggles individuals in your family are going through, prayer strengthens the relationships within your family by growing your relationship to the Creator. That is why we see in Romans 15:5-6, Paul says, ***"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."***

That is the ultimate goal for your family, right? You desire to live in harmony together so that in the end, your family glorifies God in

unity with one voice. Prayer together is a big step that your family can take to begin cultivating unity and focusing on glorifying God. It takes regular practice to implement it into the lives of our families, but the fruit that it will yield is well worth the intentionality it requires. Seek that intentionality through prayer, and the rest will follow.

READING TOGETHER

DOING THE DISHES, DEVOTION 2

Michelle Moshier | *Nursery & Pre-K Director*

Reading the Bible together is like letting the dishes soak and absorb the cleaning solution that is applied, in order to make scrubbing (the sin out of our lives) easier. When sharing the activity of reading the Bible together as a family, I think about the times my Grandma would read to me at her house. Now, this particular family Bible had lots of pictures and illustrations in it, I am assuming it was more of a children's Bible, but none the less it had all the amazing truths in it that God has for each of us. Not only to read but to go out and share with others. That is one of the important attributes I personally have taken from these precious moments with my Grandma (who now enjoys her eternal days with our Heavenly Father) and the bond we built together. It became something we not only enjoyed to do together but allowed me to openly talk to her about sin in my life because I trusted her. I valued her open opinions because she always made sure to remind me of what we learned by reading God's Word. It is being able to not only retain but to internalize essential stories about God's dealings with His people that grounds us firmly in our own faith.

I love how the Bible does not hide the fact that real people lived in a very wicked society filled with sin, just as we do today. It shows real-life problems and issues we face as adults or even our children face on a daily basis. Reading these things together as a family will help you recognize that the Bible is not just a book of rules or a collection of fairytales. Reading the Word together sets something for us to model to those around us and hold those who take part accountable. It is just as my grandma did with me.

When you read the Bible together as a family, it naturally brings questions forward for us to discuss right away: What are our beliefs? Why? How and when will God answer the prayers we have been praying for, for long periods of time? These are questions that may lead to salvation or baptism. We want to have all the important conversations with our loved ones so that they do not conform (corrupt) to what the world has turned this temporary place we call home. We need to be the light for others to follow. Taking the time out of each day to be present with one another is key to accomplishing the facts I mentioned above. That includes getting rid of all the distractions for everyone in the family or who is taking part. We need to focus on turning off the television, putting away our cell phones, scheduling activities, appointments or running errands when it does not conflict with the precious family time you have set aside for your loved ones. What will you change in your lifestyle today to read the Bible together as a family, and just let it soak in?

SERVING TOGETHER

DOING THE DISHES, DEVOTION 3

Jake Blaska

When I was sixteen years old, my parents told my siblings and me that we were going over to our relatives to help them get "situated" in their new home (It is funny how my Dad always says that word). My Mom was pretty sly, forgetting to tell us that there was no service where they lived. I could go a day without my phone, but to miss the Michigan vs. Michigan State game was a dagger in the back.

This led to a series of complaints, whines, and fits. Due to my frustration and immaturity with the whole situation, I took no time to vent to God; rather, I continued to quarrel with my own family.

- "Why are we here?"
- "All these people do is take from us."
- "They do not treat us well."
- "They don't deserve it!"

I did not see or care for God's plan for having us there to help our relatives get settled. I missed an opportunity to serve others and exemplify who Jesus was and is, and I did my younger brother no favors.

What is the first thing you say to a family member when you get home most days?

- "Hi, how was your day?"
- "Is there anything with which I can help you?"

Have you ever been so concerned about yourself that the first thing you say is, "What's for dinner?" I am so guilty of this! We all have

days where we feel drained from work, school, or sports, and we miss out on opportunities to be used by God at home. I will not lie, there are days when I just am not "feeling" it, but I need to remind myself with almost an ultimatum-kind-of Scripture.

Joshua 24:15 says, ***"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."***

My favorite meal for dinner growing up was sloppy joes, cheesy potatoes, and absolutely no vegetables. Everyone in the family has a job when it comes to dinner. One of my parents would cook, and the other would clean the kitchen after dinner. My siblings and I would set the table, do the dishes, and take out the trash. Teamwork makes the dream work!

However, I need to be honest! It was not like that every night. One of us was always "not feeling it," which made at least one other individual quite bitter. As parents and older siblings, you are called to a higher standard. Family dinners are important, so it is vital not to let one's selfishness spoil your opportunity to show them who Jesus was and is. Serving together as a family is a necessity because it gives us an opportunity to teach our kids, siblings, and others to think beyond themselves and their own needs.

Mark 10:45 says, ***"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."***

We have got this backwards. Everyone thinks if they can get others to serve them, or if they always serve themselves first, then they will be happy. What brings the most joy is having joy in the Lord. It is

hard at first to sacrifice things that we are bound to like missing a football game, but it cannot be compared to the joy that comes from humbling yourself before someone else who "does not deserve it."

Parents have a huge influence on their kids. Older siblings have a huge influence on their younger siblings. We need to choose every day what kind of influence we want to be to them, so we do not miss or choke an opportunity to show Him to our family and through our family.



GATHERING TOGETHER

DOING THE DISHES, DEVOTION 4

James Clouse

One of the things that our family enjoys doing is hopping in the car and going for a car ride. Most of the time, it is nowhere in particular. Sometimes we will just get in the car, pick a direction, and start driving. We have found some really interesting places in our family drives. We have run into some amazing flea markets, thrift stores, some hole in the wall diners, and even some small city festivals such as the Bean Festival. On those nice summer days, we will drive rocking out to some classic rock or top Christian artists with the windows down. I enjoy this time with my family because I am getting time to gather with them, worship together, talk together, and enjoy time with each other. We talk about everything from time with the church, school, our future, and many more things.

God's Word has a lot to say about gathering together and doing things together as a family. One passage, in particular, came to mind when I was thinking about my time together with my family.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9 says, ***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."***

Anytime we are spending time together and gathering together with our family; we should be focusing on this passage. Every time that we sit down with our family, when we sit in our house, when we are going for a walk, when you are putting our children to bed, and when we wake up, we should be reminding our family of our need to love God with all of our hearts. Have talks about events in life and how God can use those events to grow in the Lord. Use every opportunity you have to talk about His love for us.

One of the things I have started doing with Lorelai, our daughter, is having her come to a gathering with us every Sunday morning. She goes to one of the children's gathering and then comes into one of the church gatherings. This time is not only for her to learn but for us to spend time learning as a family. This time we get to worship together, learn together, and have things to talk about after the gathering. Encourage your family to be attending gatherings together to not only grow as a family but to grow in the church.

This week go for a drive. If you do not have time for that, I encourage you to listen to a sermon together, do a devotional together, or maybe even go for a walk and talk about God's love.

PLAYING TOGETHER

DOING THE DISHES, DEVOTION 5

Mark O'Connor | *Student Director*

This has been a truly exhausting week. I am spent both mentally and physically. My family has endured one of the most shocking experiences of which we can think. It was not a death or illness, but the fall of a man we all love and respected. As I researched what the Bible had to say about playing together and spending time together, I learned that it does not say a lot. It speaks of unity and supporting one another. Both of these are incredibly important.

The idea of playing together, or rather just being together having fun and laughing together is of the utmost importance. Many times this week, my wife and I sat in our home, pondering and processing the weight of this terrible thing called sin. Then my boys, having no idea yet what was going on in our heads, would pop their head out of their bedroom for a moment or a few and just come talk. They might come out and share a meme, and we would all laugh. The helped me through this week more than they will ever really understand. Even after a long Sunday of talking to both students and adults, my family provided me the comfort and distraction we all needed at that moment.

Parents, play with your kids when they are young. These are the times and experiences they will remember and cherish. Spend time with your kids as you age. You will help each other and honor the Lord when you do this. Lean on each other and support each other. You are helping one another in ways you might not know.

We are instructed to live in brotherly love over and over again in Scripture. Psalm chapter 133 tells us this, even though it is only three

verses long. Verse 1 tells us, ***"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!"***

God uses the family as a picture of what the church is supposed to look like. Let us take time to think about how our families honor God in that picture. Love each other and live together well. Enjoy each other with the same zeal that Jesus calls us.

TEAM EFFORT

DOING THE DISHES, DEVOTION 6

Danielle Hardenburg

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up." Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NIV)

I love to cook for my family. I love just being in a kitchen. I find myself loitering at my counter looking for something to make all the time. I enjoy making my family's favorite dishes and surprising them randomly, but my favorite is making desserts. I like eating them too, but that is another story. We grew up eating as a family around the table almost daily if time, sports, and clubs allowed it. Now, as a mom, my family does the same: however, the cleanup duty has changed quite a bit since I was a kid. Growing up we had two dishwashers, and that was my sister and me (She has never gotten over the fact that while I was in high school our parents bought an actual "real" dishwasher. My life was so much easier than hers). My children think that washing the dishes means tossing a Cascade Pac into the box and pushing a button. Sometimes they assume since the door is closed that it is fused shut forever and the sink is the dumping ground for all. Because I have three growing boys and the dishes are relentless, they now have acquired some larger cleanup chores.

The first time I enlisted my oldest to hand wash the cooking pans, he asked, "Do I really have to put my hands in the water? That is gross." After the laughter and suck it up speech, I was able to explain how awesome it would be to have help so we could move onto something fun as a family much faster than if I did it all myself.

My kids are natural helpers, nonetheless, dishes had been something that I always did on my own. Changing that expectation in my house has blessed us in so many ways. Basically, since that day, my oldest takes to helping a bit easier because he saw how quickly we could get things cleaned up working together as a team. He often also models that example to my younger boys who are more inclined to whack things out so we can move onto something more enjoyable for all of us. They still would rather dry than wash any day of the week, but it has made our "work" time shorter and our family time sweeter.

Chores do not only help lighten the load on everyone else, but it also helps us prepare our children for when they begin to live on their own. Not only can we train them for the future, but we can also create teachable moments.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." Deuteronomy 6:5-7





LESSON FOUR

Leftovers

JAYSON COMBS
FAMILY PASTOR

I hate leftovers. They can cause tension in my home. My wife is a wonderful cook. She always takes care of us when it comes to meals. However, she would love for me to eat the meal we had the next day. I just cannot do leftovers.

What is your favorite leftover meal?

_____
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Have you ever had a bad leftover meal experience?

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What normally happens to leftover meals in your home?

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Leftovers can cause great problems in our family. We can allow problems, hurts, pain, anger, and bitterness to be leftover in our hearts. Out of that pain can grow separation, miscommunication, division, assumptions, and many other problems that hurt the unity of the family. Ephesians 4:26-27 says, ***"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."***

Anger is not always sin. There is righteous anger against sin. Jesus shows us that. John MacArthur says, "But even righteous anger can easily turn to bitterness resentment and self-righteousness." We all know that problems are going to come up in our family, but if you do not deal with those leftovers, it can lead you to sin. Not dealing with the leftovers gives an opportunity for the devil in your family.

MacArthur goes on to say that if anger is not dealt with, Satan "will feed our anger with self-pity, pride, self-righteousness, vengeance, defense of our rights and every other sort of selfish sin and violation of God's holy will." Paul adds in 2 Corinthians 2:11. ***"So that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs."***

Leftovers not dealt with can turn to poison quickly.

Luke 15:11-24 records a familiar story: ***"And he said, 'There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 'But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.***

And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe,

and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."

Have you ever thought of what hurts the father could be carrying?

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How did he respond?

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It is amazing to me how we, as Christians, so many times, do not deal with hurts correctly. Those leftovers quickly poison our lives and our families' lives.

What hurts was the prodigal son's brother carrying?

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How did he respond?

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Have you ever responded like the brother?

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Have you ever been able to let go of family hurt? What has happened because of that?

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What do these verses say about leftovers?

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There are several verses that challenge how we deal with past issues.

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." Ephesians 4:31

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Romans 12:18

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Matthew 5:9

Is there a family member that feels like they cannot come home because of the hatred you have for them?

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How did Christ respond?

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Peter adds, ***"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly"*** (1 Peter 2:21-23).

How can knowing what Christ did for you help you to respond to left overs the right way?

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What are practical ways you can deal with leftovers correctly in your family?

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WHEN THINGS SPOIL

LEFTOVERS, DEVOTION 1

Tommy Youngquist | *Children's Pastor*

"Do you think this is bad?" my wife said to me as I started to watch the first inning of the Tigers' game. She was prepping lunches for the week and had some left-over chicken from a previous lunch. "Give it the smell test!" I exclaimed. "I'm not smelling this; you smell it." I reluctantly got up from my comfortable spot on the couch, walked over to the fridge, and cracked the lid. "Yep, it's bad!"

When food spoils, it smells really bad. You know it, I know it. When family relationships spoil though, it is not so easily detectable. There is this feeling of awkwardness, all of the time. There is a sense of obligation because after all, they are family. There is sensitivity that develops into bitterness. That bitterness develops into anger and hate. Then that hate develops into malice! Before you know it, you actually wish bad on the people you are supposed to love the most. When is enough, enough? When do you cut the cord?

The answer to those questions is never! Need I remind you of two principles found in God's Word. First, nothing anyone has done to you is worse than what you did to God, and God forgave you.

Colossians 3:12-13 says, ***"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."***

You cannot miss the word ***"must"*** in verse 13. We do not have another option besides forgiveness. Why? It is because the Lord has

forgiven you. Second, no matter how many times someone offends you, you still find it in your heart to forgive them.

Matthew 18:21-22 says, ***"Then Peter came up and said to him, 'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.'"***

You should read the parable after these verses. It is pretty incredible. Here is the point: Enough is never enough when it comes to forgiveness. God also gave you common sense for a reason. If a family relationship has spoiled to the point of continual emotional, psychological, or physical abuse, maybe it is time to distance yourself from that family member. Forgive them, but remove that sin from your life. Pray to God for opportunities to fix it and wait patiently. Pray that God humbles them and brings them back to you. Always be eager to receive them back.

FREEZER BURN

LEFTOVERS, DEVOTION 2

James Mann | *Children's Director*

"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."
Ephesians 4:25-27

One of my most favorite freezer foods is chicken taquitos. Nothing is better than pulling out the George Foreman Grill and cooking up a half box of those in the middle of the day. The problem is what you do with the other half of the box. My dad tells me that I am like a bull in a china shop, and he is not wrong. I demolish the box as soon as I try to open it. So, the next viable option is to put the leftovers in a plastic bag. Since I have the focus of a toddler, sometimes I do not check to make sure the bag is completely closed. You can fill in the blanks from there. I go back a few weeks later to finish the second half of the bag, and they are all freezer burned.

We have been learning about the things that are left over after the problems within the family. One option that many of us take is to put the issues into the freezer and forget about them until we think we need to work through it. Sometimes we think life is easier if we avoid hard situations. Sometimes you will think that going to bed and trying again in the morning will solve all your worldly problems. The truth is, when we open our eyes in the morning, our reality is still the same. God has warned us about these situations. We cannot let the issues within the family sit in the freezer. If it festers, it will grow in severity until it is out of our control, and any chance of reconciliation has diminished. It is these moments where we need to

drop everything and focus on the family with which God has blessed us. Do not put the important things in your life in the freezer.

REHEATING

LEFTOVERS, DEVOTION 3

Justin Dean | *Student Director*

One of the riskiest things you can do is eat something straight out of the microwave. When you are heating something back up in the microwave, you have to make sure you cook it for the perfect amount of time. If you do not, it could end up being too cold to eat, or it could end up burning the fire out of your mouth. It is like playing Russian roulette with your mouth. You have to be careful and make sure that you know what you are reheating and the best way to go about the reheating of that leftover. In our families, there are a lot of things that get reheated. We get hurt in many different ways, and as we grow as a family, inevitably old pain is going to be resurfaced. As we walk through the process of rehashing and reheating those issues as they are brought up, it is important that we do it in the right way and at the right time. As we look to the Bible for guidance, we see Proverbs 15:17-18 (NIV), ***"Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred. A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel."***

As we walk through the issues that come up from past hurt, it is important that we remember two incredibly important things, patience and love. Those two are not natural instincts. Whether we are the person who is hurt or the person who caused the hurt, our natural reaction is to pit ourselves against each other. We tend to bear our teeth and claws to either attack or defend as we deem necessary. However, this Proverb helps us to see that in the end, the most important piece of dealing with our families past issues is patience and love for each other as we walk through the difficulties of forgiveness. It is important we remember the words of Paul in

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV), ***"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."***

We have to have this mindset in the midst of dealing with old pain. If we cannot act in a way that is compassionate and seeking forgiveness and love, we will only cause new pain out of our old scars. In the end, our goal is a restoration to each other and to Christ, and it is incredibly important that we remember that as we are in the middle of dealing with all the feelings that have arisen around those past hurts. As we seek to be restored, peace, patience, and forgiveness need to be the tools we use to navigate our family's past issues.

LEFTOVER RECIPES

LEFTOVERS, DEVOTION 4

Katrina Young | *Assistant to the Family Pastor*

I love watching the *Food Network,* and in particular, I love watching *"Chopped"* episodes. It always amazes me to see how a chef can take four or five mystery leftover ingredients that do not go together at all and transform them into amazing dishes. The rules are, if all the ingredients are not used and they are not made to work together, you guessed it - "They get Chopped!" I once watched a chef take leftover French fries, cut away the outer crust and scrap the soft insides to make a potato dish. With patience and precision, he carefully took something that I would have thrown away and made it into something amazing.

Our family's baskets are sometimes like those mystery ingredients; they have nothing seemingly in common with each other. When pain and brokenness are present, there seems to be that missing component to bring unity. Broken families are not something new, in fact, if you go way back to the beginning and read the story of Adam and Eve, you will find a couple who had a perfect life, and then they sinned. The two broken people then had children and became a broken family. Our need for Christ began in their brokenness.

In an article by Billy Graham entitled, *"Mending a Broken Home,"* he wrote, "A home is like a solar system. The sun, the center, holds the solar system together. If it were not for the sun, the solar system would fly to pieces. Unless the Son of God is put at the center of your home, it, too, may fly to pieces. Make the Son of God the center of your home."

When we allow Christ to be the "Master Chef" in our lives, He can peel away the outer shell and work in our hearts to transform us. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we read, ***"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."***

If a skilled chef can work miracles with leftover food, what can God do with the incompatible broken pieces of your family?

Romans 8:28 (Berean Study Bible) says, ***"And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose."***

NO FOIL IN THE MICROWAVE

LEFTOVERS, DEVOTION 5

Jake Blaska

Letting go is not a one-time deal. I have tried. I have tried telling God, "I forgive him" when I still feel angry. Putting it behind you requires a lot of strength, and it is easier when I lean on God and remember the love of Jesus. For example, my sister and I beef. To beef means to bicker. We beef constantly! She is finishing up her psychology degree at a very prestigious school, and I am currently working towards an associates degree from my local community college. So we come from two different schools of thought. I have a bad itch for bringing things back up that I should leave in the past. It is really difficult to avoid arguments in general, but one thing I have strived to do this past year is not let them get out of hand. The devil is at work in those moments, when we are on edge. James 4:7 says, ***"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."***

My sister never gave me the attention I craved growing up. I do not think she wanted to lift my ego any higher than it already was. This still frustrates me. Anytime we beef, the devil reminds me of the neglect when all I wanted was for her to recognize me. I sound so dramatic right now because that is what Satan does. He exaggerates the thoughts that make it feel impossible to ignore in a situation that is already full of tension. However, it is crucial we ignore these bad memories regardless of how we feel in the moment. That is if we have forgiven the person (my sister does not need forgiveness for helping me learn that not everyone is going to like you). We need to realize that those memories are not God reminding us, so we can counter our opponent in an argument and win. It is the devil reminding us, so we can blow up the argument and lose.

Isaiah 43:18-19 says, ***"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."***

We are all trying to stay focused on what God is doing right now in our own lives, so it does no good to revive things that are like aluminum foil in the microwave. We need to throw that junk out when it reappears. We need to resist the devil in those situations. It is only going to make things worse. I am sorry for the ten thousand "we need" statements. However, forgiveness is not short-term. You have not forgiven someone if you are always bringing it back up to the dinner table when you argue about politics and the GOAT debate between LeBron and MJ. Family dinners can get heated, but they should not get out of hand. The devil has no seat at the table. Do not throw the aluminum foil into the microwave.

WHEN TO THROW IT AWAY

LEFTOVERS, DEVOTION 6

Kyle Wendel | *Children & Student's Director*

What do you do with leftover food that you have? Do you throw it out or store it in the fridge? Do you do any meal preparations? Do you have it for lunch the next day? Does it sit in your fridge for weeks until you notice a rotten smell when you open your fridge? There are some things that take a long time to go bad, and there are things that go bad quickly. Have you ever had leftover fast food? What is wrong with you?! Fast food goes bad like five minutes after you order it. Do not get me wrong, I love a good trip to Taco Bell, but it is never good as leftovers.

I have never been someone who is into leftovers at all. Once I eat a meal, I am done with it. By the time the next day rolls around for leftovers, that meal no longer sounds appealing to me. We could have some leftover chicken and my mind will always go to, "Pizza sounds really good right now." Does a new meal just sound so much better? My wife hates this about me. She is the kind of person who wastes no food. If there are leftovers, we are eating all of them. Over the past couple years my wife has opened my eyes to leftovers and how they can actually be pretty good and a way to save money and eat healthier. The Lord knows I need her in my life, even for the small things. I may not get all the pizza I want, but it is better for me in the long run.

The real question is for how long are leftovers good? I know I have toed the line a few times on how close something is to going bad. You almost always can rely on the smell test. If it smells rotten, do not touch it! Throw it away and be done with it. We need to look at our lives in this perspective sometimes. How often do we allow leftovers in our lives to turn bad before we take care of them?

Bad leftovers can be a multitude of things. It can be old baggage we carry, old relationships that bring us down, bitterness, jealousy, sin in our lives, anger, old ways, and a host of other poor choices. We let these things begin to stink in our lives. We leave these leftovers in our lives, and we do not take care of them. We let them sit in our hearts, and we begin to rot because of them. With leftovers, once one thing begins to rot, the whole meal is gone. You must throw it out once it is spoiled.

Ephesians 4:31-32 says, ***"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."*** We need to examine our lives and see what has gone bad in our hearts and lives. Are we holding on to sin and allowing bitterness to destroy us? We must throw it in the trash today. Do not let sin take root in your heart and begin to spoil everything in your life. Throw out the garbage that is in you. Only keep what is still good. That good is the goodness from Jesus. We need to learn when to throw out the bad leftovers in our lives. Jesus shows us how to do that very thing. I love how Ephesians 4:31-32 shows to throw out the junk and to put on Jesus. Put on the love that Jesus has shown. Put on the forgiveness that Jesus so graciously gives. How can we hold on to such things when Jesus has forgiven us of all sin if we believe and trust in His sacrifice?

What are some leftovers that have spoiled in your life?

What are you going to do to throw them out today?



OUR MISSION

Matthew 28:19-20: ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

REACH

At The River Church, you will often hear the phrase, "we don't go to church, we are the Church." We believe that as God's people, our primary purpose and goal is to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ. We encourage you to reach the world in your local communities.

GATHER

Weekend Gatherings at The River Church are all about Jesus, through singing, giving, serving, baptizing, taking the Lord's Supper, and participating in messages that are all about Jesus and bringing glory to Him. We know that when followers of Christ gather together in unity, it's not only a refresher it's bringing life-change.

GROW

Our Growth Communities are designed to mirror the early church in Acts as having ***"all things in common."*** They are smaller collections of believers who spend time together studying the Word, knowing and caring for one another relationally, and learning to increase their commitment to Christ by holding one another accountable.

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