

Building Strong Families

By Eddie Spencer

The Bible says, “*unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain*” (Ps. 127:1). How then do we build strong homes? The Bible responds, “*By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures?*” (Prov. 24:3-4).

Such wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. If our house is going to be built on a strong foundation and our family flourish, we must model and teach the wisdom and Word of God. “*Love the Lord your God... These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them upon your children*” (Deut. 6:5-7). This is God’s foundation. A family can possess everything, yet unless the home gives a spiritual foundation, built on the Word of God and the good news of life in Jesus Christ, a family has nothing that lasts.

Secondly, strong families are ones where affirmation is expressed. William James noted, “From cradle to grave, one of the deepest needs is to be appreciated.” For every, “No, what are you thinking?” there should be ten, “Good job”, “Well done”, “That’s great.” Yet affirming our children and others in the family is more than just encouraging and appreciating one another. A familiar Bible verse is, “*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it*” (Prov. 22:6). The Amplified Bible gives us an interesting insight into the meaning of this verse. “*Train up a child in the way he should go (and in keeping with his individual gift or bent) and when he is old he will not depart from it*” (Prov. 22:6 Amplified Bible).

Psalm 139:13 says, “*For you,*” and the “*you*” being in great emphasis, denotes that it is the Lord and only the Lord who is the Creator. “*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb*” (Ps. 139:13). If we are going to affirm one another in the context of the family, we must know one another. Our children arrive in our arms, longing to be known, nurtured, and loved as they have been uniquely made by God. Isn’t this true for all of us? To affirm one another in the family is to work at knowing the personality, temperament, talents and strengths of each other as they have been uniquely made, and then to strive at bringing out the best in them.

Thirdly, if we are going to build strong families, affirmation must be expressed and affection must be demonstrated. The Apostle Paul shared a poignant word with the church of Thessalonica that should be powerfully applied in our families. Paul, writing of his affection for the church, says, “*we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us*” (1 Thess. 2:7-8). Paul could have employed 7 to 8 words that communicated the idea of affection, yet he chose a Greek word I do not believe is used anywhere else in the New Testament. He used a term of endearment taken from the nursery. The word picture is of a father holding his beloved child with tenderness and firmness. This is the kind of affection needed in our families. Sadly, as the years pass, work increases, pressures mount, and demands compete for our time. That kind of affection can quickly wane. Positive non-verbal communication, gentle touching and hugging are just some of the ways to demonstrate affection.

Lastly, and consistent with the principles of affirmation and affection in the family, we must practice understanding if our families would be strong. “*The purposes of a man’s heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out*” (Prov. 20:5). Our children’s, spouses’ and siblings’ deepest thoughts and potential are like treasures on the ocean floor. They can be covered up by debris, never to surface; or they can be gently nurtured to the surface where thoughts, dreams, and potential become realized.

The practice of understanding calls for the family members to be available and involved with one another. It demands time, energy and money. It calls for priorities to be reorganized and schedules to be restructured. What in our schedules is more important than our child’s ballgame or school play? What will give a greater return than the investment in our children’s spiritual legacy and success?

We all want our families to be healthy and strong. Consider and put into practice God’s wisdom from strong families. Build a spiritual foundation, express affirmation, demonstrate affection and practice understanding.