

Disintegrators of the Family

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[0:00] Amen. Disintegrators of the family. We're witnessing the destruction of the family unit.

! Let us turn to God's marriage manual, to Colossians.! We're going to project the verses here, chapter 3, verse 18.

This is God's marriage manual. This is the how-to book of marriage. And we're talking about marriage as fitting, being Mother's Day. Of course, we think of mothers, of our own mothers, of the mothers that are here, mothers-to-be.

The whole family is special and important to God. We think of our mothers today, as I say. We think of mothers, of fathers, of husbands, of wives, of children, of parents.

They're all interconnected. And God's marriage manual has the answers for us in a world where it seems the world's bent on the destruction of the family unit. Colossians 3, verse 18, it says this, Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as it is fit in the Lord.

[1:19] Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. We're going to look at some four disintegrators of the family, if you like.

Whether you realise it or not, the devil hates families. He hates them. He wants to destroy homes. There's a story when told of a woman, Mrs. Dorothy Irwin. She drove home to a house in California, and she found there a pile of kindling wood where there once was a house at the corner of Raven Street and Eldridge Avenue.

And she saw this busy bulldozer operator there, and she yelled out to him, What are you doing? The man said he had a contract to raise a house on Raven Street, but the bulldozer driver had demolished the wrong home.

[2:34] Friends, the devil is in the home demolition business, isn't he? He destroys homes. He wants to destroy homes. He attacks homes. More like termites do, really.

Quietly and often unnoticed, gradually, until it's too late. And the family is the basic building block of society.

All of us want a home, our home to be a place of happiness and peace. The devil is working overtime these days, busy tearing apart the moral fabric of the world, and is actively involved in the destruction of the family.

The breakdown of the family is evident, especially with the statistics. It's just in your face. Over 40% of first marriages end in divorce.

Over 60% of second marriages. And over 70% of third marriages. So what's the answer? Don't get married. No. No. Make it work the first time.

[3:38] God helping you. More than one million Australian children will see their parents divorced in the next 20 years. These are sad statistics, aren't they? And of course we know that sad reality comes home to us.

Some of us have been affected by these things. And look, we know that's the tragedy. And that we've got to go beyond that. If it's happened to us, God helps us to find His healing and His help. But friends, we're seeing where the home is under attack. Friends, it truly is. The modern home, it's not really a home. Someone has said, it's more like a hotel with rooms and sometimes bored and frequently only places to get a few hours sleep.

You know, the home is almost, it's devalued today. Marriage is devalued. Friends, marriage is a lifetime decision. It's the commitment of two hearts. It's the blending of two lives.

And the family unit is vital if we are to have a healthy society. Our families need to be strengthened. And whatever the state of your family is, you might be a single parent, a single one today, whatever your situation of life, God knows that for you.

[4:53] And He's got the answers for you. And the help for you. Sometimes marriages fail and they're beyond repair. We know that. But God helping us, there is hope. And whatever the state of our marriage situation, whether we're married, single, divorced, God can help you in terms of what the Word of God tells you.

It's been said, for best results, follow the instructions of the maker. That's what they put on bottles of cold remedies. The best results follow the instructions of the maker.

And we know God helping us as the godly ones in a marriage situation. If we follow God's instructions, the maker's instructions, that'll help us to get His help.

And if such advice is good advice for the relief of a common cold, how much more, the maker's instructions are the answers. How to have a home that God is pleased with.

God will help us to have that. And the world is redefining a family today. It's like family doesn't mean what it always has meant through history. You can have two lesbians and an artificially conceived child, and they call that a family.

[6:10] The family, as the world would call it, could encompass all manner of perverse relationships. But we know that's not of God. And God is grieved with that.

That cultural mind shift that's away from the Bible. We see cloning today, and people playing God, and just this mockery of the things of God, of what is right.

Friends, we've got to go back to the maker's instructions. It's important that we build our home on the Lord. And we get these concepts of family right. So we must refer to the maker's instructions.

Friends, marriage and the family is God's idea. It's His plan, the divine plan. Right from Genesis, God established the family unit. It's given us the keys, the keys for a happy home.

And in the very beginning, He created them male and female. People don't even get that basic fact right. He created the family unit. Marriage and family was divinely created.

[7:14] And God gives us the rules to help make it work. So there's principles here in the Word of God that make a family work. They help us to build the foundations for our homes.

Our cracks appearing in the foundation of our home. It could be that we're missing something of the guidelines God has given us. God knows if we follow His guidelines, He can help us through.

He can give us the strength. He can help us weather the storms that rage against our home. And Satan wants to weaken the family unit, to bring the family under the rule of His kingdom.

Friends, Satan is the arch enemy of the home. He loves nothing more than to destroy families. And we know he does that. And it's sad. Friends, it's the fact that Satan has often cursed the marriages of Christians in the hope that they will fail.

They will succumb to the pressure and divorce. Families are under so much pressure these days. We know that. It grieves me. I know I grieve with you that I have suffered such things.

[8:20] The crumbling is going on. Relationships destroyed. And destroyed beyond repair sometimes. We know that. God can help you to move forward. Is the home important?

Absolutely. When the home is lost, everything is lost. A nation is a group of homes. A city is a group of homes. A state is a group of homes. A church is a group of homes.

And weak homes make weak churches and weak nations. We want to have God helping us to be a godly church with godly families. Building on that foundation of the word.

To be that strong home. That is really the vital building block, isn't it? For the survival of decency in society. The future of our community hinges upon it.

So we need to go back to the Bible. To restore Bible principles. God's principles. Here's the one that shows us how. Homes need time dedicated to play and pray together.

[9:25] Homes need a living and loving faith in the Lord Jesus. Godly, dedicated, consistent husbands and wives. Mothers and fathers. Let's examine together the biblical blueprint for the family.

The greatest need. Really it's the greatest need of our nation. Of our homes. It's where Christ is on it. So God's model for marriage is here.

We're going to look at that. Marriage is meant for a lifetime. It's permanent. Someone commented, Our church fellowship hall has framed Bible verses on the wall.

Most of them extolling God's love and care. But there was a recent wedding reception. And the bride and groom were photographed in front of this Bible text.

And as they were cutting the cake there, the couple were cutting the first piece. And behind them was these words. Flee from the wrath to come. Maybe some marriages have got a bit of wrath in them.

[10:25] But it's been said sometimes marriage, with marriage, it's the first hundred years that are the hardest. So once you get beyond the one hundred, you're okay.

It takes work. Friends, it takes work. And we're not making light of sad things happening in families. But God helping you. You can find God's help. Whatever the situation you're in.

And again, God's commands can help make it work. We're seeing this battle on the home front.

We're going to look at these four disintegrators of the family together. So number one is this one.

Disorder. Addressing the wives, Paul says, Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as it is fit in the Lord. Disorder is something that disrupts, that disintegrates families.

It says, submit. Now wives are called to exercise obedience. To be in order. To be under authority. It's fit. It's proper. It's right.

[11:27] For the wife to do this. It's her duty. In Ephesians 5, it also says the wife should reverence her husband. Treat him with respect. The wife should submit herself in obedience and humility.

And whilst this verse addresses the wife, it's actually twofold. The husband and the wife. There's a mutual submission. There's a sense where the two are under God.

In mutual submission under God. To one another. Husband to wife. Wife to husband. Out of reverence for Christ.

Submitting yourselves, therefore, one to another in the fear of God. Friends, God's plan is that there be a harmony in the home.

Not an unhappy marriage, a broken home. One key disintegrator is disorder in the home. When the order gets wrong, it's going to be difficult for that marriage.

[12:31] People want healthy relationships. Happy homes. A harmony. Where there's peace and security. Satan wants to destroy that. He wants to create chaos and disorder.

The Bible speaks about God as being... That he wants things done decently and in order. Look at the universe. The solar system. It's all working in this wonderful order.

God is the creator of order. And Satan is the creator of disorder. Isn't he? The world we live in is one of the new world disorder, you could say. It's like you hear what the media says.

And everything you know is wrong. You know, I woke up this morning and I saw... What was it it said? We wish everyone a happy birthing persons day today.

We can't say, oh, don't use the M word. It's birthing persons now. That's the politically correct thing. Because, of course, men can have babies now, can't they? No.

[13:31] So-called men that have a womb. That are obviously women, really. They're called birthing persons now. Honestly. If we believe what the media says, our mind could just go completely crazy, couldn't it?

You know, black is white. White is black. Yes is no. No is yes. And we see disorder all around us.

The breakdown of basic values of law and order, of common sense.

And how we need to restore God's order back into the home. Let us mend the broken relationships. White are called to submit to the husband's leadership.

Now, someone commented on this. It says, the image here is not of a mighty potentate sitting on his throne and ruling his subjects with an iron fist and an iron hand, but more like a conductor standing on the platform directing a symphony.

Delicate, defined, subdued, yet powerful. You know, the man is not meant to be some kind of, you know, heavy-handed boss, authority, but a loving servant leadership.

[14:36] God's design is order. That's the point. It's order, not disorder. God wants the man to step up to that position of responsible leadership, of loving leadership.

Sarah obeyed her husband in 1 Peter 3 verse 6. It says, Sarah called Abraham, calling him Lord. Now, there's a sense where there's a rightful authority.

And where the will goes, the heart will follow. Married women decide to be a submissive wife. What was it that took Satan out of heaven as the archangel Lucifer?

Rebellion. It made it into God's enemy. Satan, the enemy of God. Our enemy, the adversary.

Rebellion has broken many homes. Most of the homes are broken by divorce.

It's been rebellion there. Wives, obey your husbands. And if it seems hard, obey them. And let God put love in your hearts. Now, for some, we know the situations where you don't obey them, where they're trying to get you to do something sinful or wrong or evil.

[15:42] It's as unto the Lord. But that sense of obeying, of that submission, it's a sense of forgiving, of forgetting the past.

If there's been heart-taking trouble, have that heart of forgiveness. Ask God to make your home sweet, to refresh your love. Friends, the king disintegrator, number one, is that sense of disorder. Disorder. We'll move on to the second one. Number two here. Disunity is another disintegrator of the home. Disunity. Addressing the husbands now. Paul says this.

Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them. One of the tactics of the destroyer of the home is this one that says he wants to disintegrate by disunity, to attack that love and unity within a marriage.

Paul's addressing the husbands here. Husbands have a central role in leading the home, being the head of the family. In Titus 2 verse 4, Paul also instructs the women, likewise, love your husbands.

[16:51] That's Titus 2 verse 4. Well, let's talk to the men here. Someone has put it that many of the family problems of today are due to weakling men, slackers and shirkers and quitters, who are not willing to bear the responsibilities which God lays on them as heads of families.

Wake up men and obey God on this one. Love your wives. Sometimes that love is the love that's not returned. And I know you're doing that.

God helping you. Marriage is that sacred bond, that sacred covenant before God. And the devil wants to sever this glue, this sacred union, to tear it apart.

Friends, love is that glue that holds the family together. And God helping us will have that bond of oneness, that unity in a marriage. And it can be hard when you're maybe on different wavelengths where one might believe and another disbelieve.

God can help you work through that. You can be a witness in your home. And this love can overcome. This love, and when we talk about this kind of love, it's not a sappy, emotional, feeling-centered attraction.

[18:05] It's a love that goes the distance. It's unconditional. It's love that has no strings. It's love that makes no demands. It's a faithful love. It's a tender love.

A sacrificial love. Real love. And the love for God will ensure that love for one another and all the members of the family. Husbands, treat your wife like a VIP.

Love even as Christ loved the church. Wow. Can you get a higher love than that one? In the same manner as Christ loved the church, so, man, let us love our wife.

And it talks about that he would present her glorious, as a glorious church. And it means that he would hold her in honour.

Husbands, do you hold your wife in honour? No unkind word. No embarrassment. No cutting remarks. You know, I have to be careful myself. I have to put my foot in it.

[19:04] I've got to confess that. And Julie will say amen to that. You know, we've got to be careful, don't we? We can say things, foolish things. We can act foolish, and it causes hurt.

Thirteen times, Paul tells the husband of the role that they have as leader within the family. The man needs to provide and protect the family.

And he's responsible. He's accountable. He's the head of the family. Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church. Here's this one about honour. And love, it means giving.

Love your wife even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. This love is a deep love. It's a giving love. And friends, it's been said, a happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers. Now, some bear, they bear a bitterness, there's a bitterness there, there's a lack of forgiveness there, and that just destroys that unity, that union, that bond, that God wants.

[20:05] It's been said, even if marriages are made in heaven, man has to be responsible for the maintenance. Now, in the real day-by-day world, it's those practical things of life, isn't it?

At times, the day-by-day realities, where sometimes we are not wise. I'm talking to me. Paul says, be not bitter against them.

Don't be bitter against them. The opposite of bitter is what? Sweet. The opposite of bitter is sweet. Be sweet.

Be sweet. Don't treat them harshly. It's been said, kindness is the language that the deaf can hear and the simple can understand. The husband, it says here, is to honour, give honour to his wife. That's something important, isn't it? Friends, honour your wife. So marriage is about these two lives becoming one. It's commitment, it's caring love, it's providing love, it's unselfish love, it's God's kind of love, love.

[21:10] And friends, God loves sinners. Many a mother loves a drunken, arrogant son, loving him all the more, even when he has broken her heart many times. Ask God to give you a loving heart.

And friends, when we talk about love, it's not so much a feeling, it's a commitment. It's not an option, it's a command. Husbands, express your love. Ephesians 5.29, it talks about a husband nourishing and cherishing.

It means tenderness. Think of these tender words. Nourishing, cherishing. The cherish here, it means to be warm, with tender care. Now, you might say, my wife is as cold as a snowball from Antarctica.

Have you tried cherishing her? It's got a sense of warming her. Got to warm up our wife's now and again. And that's a good thing, isn't it? There was a golden anniversary party that was thrown for an elderly couple, and the husband was moved by the occasion, and there was all these kind of acknowledgements and honouring of one another, and he wanted to tell his wife just how he felt about her, but she was a bit hard of hearing, and she often misunderstood what he said.

And there's many family members and friends there gathered around, and he said, he just got up and said, my dear wife, after 50 years, I've found you tried and true.

[22:38] And everyone smiled with approval, and his wife said, eh? And he repeated louder, after 50 years, I've found you tried and true. And his wife moaned and shot back, well, let me tell you something, after 50 years, I'm tired of you too.

You know, tell me the sense, the miscommunication. There's a lack of warmth there sometimes in the marriage. But friends, it's been said a wedding has been defined as a ceremony in which a man loses complete control of himself.

You know, we just, we just, we've got someone we need to put first, our wife. If you're a child of God, and you marry a child of the devil, you'll be sure to have constant trouble with your father-in-law.

So, watch out for that one. God can help when the situations, God can help you both come to faith in Christ. It's been said there are three rings to each and every marriage.

The engagement ring, the wedding ring, and suffering. You know, sometimes marriage has got to go through those things. Friends, husbands, be that godly example and head of your home.

[23:49] The first thing, a good thing for you to do is to join a good church, to submit your family to the discipline of worship. Bring your wife and your family to church. Be a spiritual leader in your home.

This world is just full of conflict, of disorder, of moral decay, of unfaithfulness. We see the breakdown of society. Fathers are needed. Men are needed.

To show some leadership. The Roman Catholic Church used to say, give us a child until he's nine years old and he'll probably always be a Catholic. You know, they know that works.

What about our children? Let's be those loving leaders, those men that will be examples in our family. Even as uncles and aunts to little ones in our family circle to lead others, our family, to

church, to biblical worship, to bring our children up in positive ways.

This kind of love will go the distance. It will bring that oneness, that unity, that sense of purpose to our home. So we've seen a couple so far of these disintegrators of the family.

[24:59] Disorder. He just wants to create chaos, doesn't he? The devil. Disunity. He wants to tear people apart. Cause hurt. Unforgiveness. Thirdly, this one here, disrespect, is another one.

Another disintegrator of the home. It's disrespect. Addressing the children now. Verse 20. Paul says, children, obey your parents in all things. So this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. It says, obey. Don't rebel. Obey your mum and dad. Listen attentively. Hear what they have to say. They've been around a bit longer than you.

It says, it pleases the Lord to listen to your parents, to respect your parents, to honour your parents. And this word, obey, it means, it's got a sense of listen under, to stand under.

No, it's come under their authority. They've got some wisdom to share, to impart. We can learn from our mums and dads, can't we? It's got this idea of a subordinate listening to one in authority and doing what is asked.

[26:02] As a soldier would come and report to his commander, as a student would come unto his teacher. And disrespect is a big problem nowadays, isn't it? See, disrespect, it's constant.

There's no respect of anything that's authority, any authority figure. They're just disrespected. Put yourself in the ones in their shoes, the ones that are meant to be respected.

You know, it's a hard job being a teacher these days. Imagine being a policeman these days. You know, the disorder, the disrespect. Friends, there's a sense in the home too where there's orders to follow.

It says to children, do what your parents say. Listen to them. Why? Because it's right. It's the right thing to do. It's well-pleasing to the Lord. It says, for this is right.

It's the righteous thing. It's proper. It's for the harmony of the home. It's for the good of the child. And it's for God's glory. We've got a massive epidemic of delinquency, don't we?

[27:00] Kids running riot. Just total lawlessness. And the Bible says it would be lawless at times. We've got a generation that has been taught they don't need to obey.

You know, they say to their teachers, who are you to tell me what to do? They talk to the teachers like that these days, don't they? Oh, I'm going to report the teacher to the principal.

It's almost like that these days, isn't it? The teacher's got to be on the best behaviour because they're the ones who are going to get in trouble. And this attitude of obedience is vital.

It's important for us. Obedience is a godly characteristic. But we've got a generation that's been taught that they don't need to obey. They don't answer to anybody. They're their own authority. And the Duke of Windsor, Windsor was asked one day what impressed him most in America and he said, the way American parents obey their children. That's what they're being taught to do, isn't it?

[27:57] Parents are being taught to obey their children nowadays. You know, that's why they put all the sweets and lollies in the checkout lanes, doesn't it? Because the parents just, they can't say, no, Johnny, no, you can't have that because, oh, yes, yeah, they just pile it into the trolley and they don't say no anymore.

And one of the characteristics of the last days, it says they will be disobedient to parents. This is one of the things the Bible says is going to happen and it is happening, isn't it?

Children being disobedient to parents amongst all the other things. And we see the results of this. Juvenile delinquency, you know, teens getting pregnant, out of wedlock, drug addicts, crime waves, violence.

The juvenile mind yearns for the hand and voice of authority but it's missing now. Children need parental authority, discipline, given in the spirit of love.

Friends, there's a great need for honour, for respect and it talks of this in the Bible of that need for reverence, for respect. So esteem and value your parents. Show them respect and love.

[29:08] Show them you care. Seek to honour them while you've got time to, while they're still living. It says in Proverbs 31, we can think of mothers today, that children rise up and call her blessed, her husband

also and he prays at her.

There's a promise attached when we honour our father and mother as rich blessings. This is one of the Ten Commandments. It says, honour thy father and mother that by days may be long upon the earth.

There's a lengthening of life, there's a blessing of God. There's obedience that makes life more enjoyable. Love your mums and dads. A rebellious attitude creates many teenagers' problems. In Exodus 21, 17, it says, the child that cursed his parents was to be stoned. Now, we don't do that nowadays, thank God, but maybe we should. No, the child that cursed their parents was stoned. That's how serious a sin it was. Satan means adversary. Rebellion, it's one of his characteristics. He wants to undermine authority and create chaos.

[30:22] Family authority is being undermined, isn't it? As mums and dads, you can identify with that, as observers of others. We see children, they're just a law unto themselves sometimes.

Friends, children need consistent discipline and wise, loving control. I'm not talking about heavy-handedness, I'm not talking about smacking the life out of them, but loving discipline. Consistent discipline. Look back on your own childhood and we can all think of some happy memories I trust of our parents. We owe them respect and honour, courtesy and love. And parents, let's not be careless too. We're called to be role models. We're under the watch of our children. So we see this disintegrator of disrespect.

The devil wants your children to question and test out your authority. So parents, stand firm. Stand firm. And seek and find God's help to be that loving authority.

[31:29] So we've seen the key disintegrators thus far in the home. Disorder to the wife, the need for submission, but mutual submission too. Order is the point. We see the need for that countering of disunity to the husband, the need for love.

Let that love be full-on not stopping. continuous and even if it being, I can't think of the word, where it's not reciprocal.

That we love no matter what. That disunity. the devil wants to destroy the unity of the home. We see disrespect for the child, the need for obedience, that need for parents and children to have that right relationship.

Now we go to number four. There's another disintegrator in the home is discouragement. Friends, discouragement. Addressing the fathers now, verse 21, it says, fathers, provoke not your children to anger lest they be discouraged.

Discouragement is a great disintegrator. You know, some children grow up with a weight of discouragement. They're never good enough. They never make the grade and there's always this weight of never achieving.

[32:45] Friends, it says, provoke not. Don't provoke your children to anger. Don't irritate or harass them. You know, I know, as a dad with my children growing up, I was a bit of a tease sometimes.

I think I tease my wife more than my kids but there's a sense where we provoke. You know, it's a provocation, isn't it? It can be unhealthy where we can be irritating them or harassing them and we don't want them to be disheartened or discouraged.

That's the point. Where someone would lose heart, where they'd have a crushed spirit. We don't want that. Rather, it says, fathers, it says, bring them up. It says, bring them up.

Raise them in maturity. Rear them. Nourish them. Nurture them emotionally and spiritually. Set a good example. Pray for them. And there's a sense where don't handicap your children by making their lives easy.

You know, you don't want to give your children everything on a silver platter where they never know how to work for their income. How they never know how to manage their budget and make a living for themselves.

[33:48] Friends, it says, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. That's Ephesians 6, verse 4, a like verse. It says, provoke not your children to wrath or anger, but bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord.

In other words, instruct them, encourage them. And it's got this sense of putting in mind this nurture, this admonition, this providing of counsel, of teaching.

There was a family specialist who lectured across America and he surveyed hundreds of children and he found three things fathers say most in responding to their kids.

This is what fathers say, the top three things fathers say. I'm too tired. That took first place. Number two, we don't have enough money. And the next one, keep quiet.

Now some children grow up, that's all their dad says to them, honestly. Rather, encourage them, encourage them, it says. Don't provoke them to anger by unreasonable commands.

[34:55] It's been said, when the child gets up to mischief, the father needs correction. Friends, there's a lack of godly fathers. It's a problem. And someone has commented, judging by church attendance, heaven will not be crowded with men.

Men are failing. There's a lack of godly fathers. It's a big problem, isn't it? It's not easy being a parent, a mother, a father. It's been said that insanity is hereditary.

You get it from your children. You're having hard work being a parent, right? Amen? The trouble with being a parent is that by the time we're experienced, we're unemployed. You know, Julie, the kids, our children gave Julie a certificate of domestic engineering because she was a homemaker in the child's growing years and now she feels like she's unemployed.

You know, the sense where she's done her job and I think she did a sterling job. Sometimes as parents we don't live up to what we want our children to do.

Train up a child in the way he should go, then go that way thyself. And we've got to be a good example. You know, you can go blab on about how your children should live and if you fail as an example yourself then it's all in vain, isn't it?

[36:17] Some homes, some families are filled with discouragement and conflict and put-downs. there's hostilities and arguments between mums and dads and the children. You know, children, you're going to be a mum or dad one day possibly.

Children, think of it, put yourself in your mum or dad's journeys how hard it is for them and give them that love. Children need parental authority combined with that guidance and support and love. And parenting involves setting limits sometimes and developing character through discipline because a lack of discipline can make a child self selfish and insecure. May our homes be places where God's love is evident.

Home is the school where life's lessons are learned. So fathers, your children need your guidance and support. Work at being a good father. Work at being a better father. Bring your children up with careful godly instruction.

Train them in biblical truth. And you are setting the example. The family that prays together stays together. Some of us said the family that smokes together chokes together.

[37:23] That's another one. But the family that prays together stays together is a good one, isn't it? Set the right example. Be a consistent example. Parenting can be hard. That's the point. And we're all being looked at as an example.

We're being looked up to. What we do, they'll copy. Generally so. There was a sign that said if evolution is true, how come mothers still have only two hands?

Now they've got such a big job, haven't they mothers? It's an enormous job. And as mums and dads, children are watching us. They're watching everything you do. Another area to be alert to is the position you take on alcohol.

Even if you indulge in moderation, your children are likely to partake in excess. If we set a standard, generally they'll push the boundaries. So what is the standard that you set for yourself and your family?

The little ones will push those boundaries, friends. Fathers, you've got a pivotal role here. We're drawing closer to a close, almost there. In Genesis 18, Abraham, it says of him, for I know him that he will command his children and his household after him.

[38:34] Abraham had this authority there. He commanded his children and his household after him. And so, especially the dads here tonight, today, think about what example you're setting.

Someone has said the average time the middle class father spends with their children is 37.7 seconds a day. That's very little, isn't it? 37 seconds a day for the average dad with their child. And look, I've got to say, I've probably failed miserably myself. And I'm not laughing about that. You know, I'd like to think I could have done better myself. You have that wisdom in hindsight, but it's too late.

Friends, while you're young parents, make it count. Amen. Amen. You know, let's not have that regret that we could have done better. It's been said that 50% of all growth in human intelligence occurs between the ages of one and four.

So here with little ones, ages one to four, it's especially important. Parents, mums and dads, let's impart to our children. Amen. The devil wants to destroy your home.

[39:45] He wants to tear it apart. Let's try to find God's plan and put it into action. So personally now, let's consider. One survey asked people, what do people consider the greatest source of pleasure is in their lives?

63% replied, the family. The family. So which gives us the most pleasure. Maybe sometimes the most pain too, isn't it? Most people think of their family as the most important thing in their lives. And friends, in order to have a strong and healthy family, a great starting place is a spiritual commitment. And that's what Joshua knew. And he called others to that.

He said, choose you this day. Whom will you serve? But as for me and my house, my family, we will serve the Lord. That's a good starting place for a family, for a husband and a wife to say, we're going to serve the Lord.

That's our priority. I want to tell you today, divorce is not normal. Divorce is not a natural part of the marriage process.

[40:57] Put God first in your home. And no family is perfect. Some have suffered the saddening of their family unit. God will help you to move forward, to find healing.

It's been said, the best part of some family trees is underground. And you might have some baggage in your past. Maybe you haven't always had a good father model, a good role model in your mother.

And sometimes past mistakes are beyond repair. Divorces have happened. Sometimes we can't fix what's well and truly broken. It's like putting scrambled eggs back together. Can't do it. Maybe your children are older and they've left the nest now.

Your influence will not be as strong. Maybe you've got grandchildren. There's opportunities to still impart. Don't be discouraged. And sometimes it's the simple, small steps that matter.

Things like saying, I'm sorry. I forgive you. I love you. Often. And make that decision. The decision that Joshua made.

[42:01] It's been said the first steps towards family happiness are the church steps. In the sense that make Christ the centre of your home. The centre of your marriage. Make Christ Lord of your home.

And for some of you that's hard. You're married to people, a spouse that may not have that same heart just now. But you can be a witness to them. You can be a loving and gracious witness. And you can show Christ love in your heart by living it out. It's a covenantal relationship, your marriage. So we've seen the families under attack as the devil would try to destroy families, to disintegrate them.

He wants to create disorder. God wants submission, a loving, mutual submission, an order within the home, a rightful authority that's the godly one.

We know the devil wants to create disunity, to just create a tearing apart. Whereas God wants a love, a glue of his love.

[43:04] We see the devil wants to create disrespect where children are just rebels and there's just a disrespect generally. But God wants an obedience, a heartfelt humility.

And then we see the devil wants to create discouragement, bitterness and hatred and children being bitter to their parents. Whereas God wants to create a nurture and an admonition, a training, a strengthening, an uplifting.

The home should be a place of encouragement, not discouragement. So let's think about these things, how we can make those changes. God helping us. And the Lord Jesus will answer your prayers.

If these things are lacking, God can help in your situation, in your home, to bring that fulfillment, that completeness that only he can give. Make Christ Lord of your home.

That's the central key. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you care about homes, about families, Lord, about even the single people here.

[44:13] We know as they might be considering their future. Perhaps they will always be single. And that can be to your glory too. Lord, for the single men, single women. Lord, we pray for those that have gone through the heartache of separation, of divorce, that be that tender healing.

Lord, give that tender healing, Lord, and that comfort that you can guide and strengthen and fill us with your peace and your grace in that circumstance.

Lord, for husbands and wives, for those who might be battling, there's misunderstandings here and there. Lord, for the tenderness of Christ to prevail. That each one might know what it is, that you can be the Lord, the Lord of that home, that family, and we can find grace to grow together.

And Lord, for the children too, that there might be a wonderful respectfulness that children can learn to come under authority and that authority will be a loving authority that is led by your Holy Spirit in gentleness and grace.

Lord, we pray for these things. We pray for each one that is in the hearing of this, that each one might know the grace of God that brings salvation. Lord, that you can save such unworthy ones as we, that we can know your peace in our heart and our home, and that we can know by faith that you died on the cross and rose again, that we can have life, life more abundant.

[45:50] In Jesus' name, amen.