

Family

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, if you'd like to learn more about us, you can go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. And we just pray as we get into the Word today that that Word can get into us and transform these hearts. Now, on a hot summer day in South Florida, a little boy decided that he wanted to go for a swim in the old swimming hole behind his house. Well, in a hurry to dive into the cool water, he flew right into the normally safe water, not realizing as he swam towards the middle of the pond, an alligator was swimming towards him.

His mother in the house was looking out the window and she saw the gator. In utter fear, she ran toward that water, screaming to her son. Hearing her voice, knowing something was wrong, the little boy quickly made a U-turn to go back to his mom.

But it was too late. Just as he reached her, that alligator latched onto him. From the dock, the mother grabbed her little boy by his arms just as the alligator snatched his legs.

[1 : 17] That began this incredible tug-of-war between the two. The alligator was much stronger, but the mom was much too passionate to let go. A farmer happened to drive by and hear her screams for help, and he quickly raced from his truck with his gun, took aim, and shot the gator.

Remarkably, after weeks in the hospital, the little boy survived. His legs were extremely scarred by this vicious attack. And on his arms were deep scratches where his mother's fingernails dug into his flesh in her effort to hang on to the son she loved.

The newspaper reporter who interviewed the boy after the trauma, he asked him, Will you show me your scars? And the little boy lifted up his pant legs, but then beaming with pride, he said, But look at my arms.

I have scars on my arms too, all because my mom wouldn't let me go. You know, isn't that a good picture of what family is meant to be?

And even sometimes in our rebellion, as we swim towards the gator, towards the world, towards the flesh, family is there to have a tug-of-war to pull our hearts back to the truth.

[2 : 31] So welcome back here to the seventh week of our series called DNA. We'll close out this series with our last value next week and also unveil our new logo for the church.

But if you're new with us today, we've been talking through our new vision, mission, and values. Our vision, Jesus first. Our mission, belong to, believe in, become like Jesus.

And then over the last few weeks here, we've been marching through our values that guide everything we do. The Bible is our authority. Authenticity is our pursuit.

Worship is our lifestyle. And then today we come to the very thing that I just started off talking about. Family is our passion. You know, one of my favorite things about this church family is that when you come to a worship service, you come to a Wednesday evening elevate, you're going to see a family.

From newborns to those in their 90s and everything in between. Actually, in the first church I served at, there's a lady who just turned 104, and she's doing great.

[3 : 46] And while blood is strong when it comes to family, I get it. I also love that God designed family to include fellow believers in Christ. Now, one great example of this are my parents.

They started going to church at Living Water Ministries here in Greensburg with Pastors Bill and Tammy Leak back in 2001 when I did. And my journey ended up taking me to Bible College and a few different places.

But they have continued to be a part of that church family for 24 years now. And when we moved back to Greensburg in 2018 for this ministry, people would ask me, or people would ask them why

they didn't switch and start coming here to FCC.

And I always joke that it's because they want to hear some good preaching. Don't tell Bill I said that. But honestly, it's because they've discovered their people. They have a great church family where they truly support and love one another.

And I'm so glad they have it. But let's talk today about why family is our passion here at FCC. If you'd like to take notes, please know you can always go to the YouVersion Bible app.

[4 : 55] It's a free download on your phone, YouVersion Bible app. Under that app, go to events, and you can go to First Christian Church at Greensburg, and you can see it.

But first today, family is a training ground. And this starts with our children. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, if FCC has a niche that we've been known for for a while now, it would be our children and youth ministries.

We really do pour a lot of resources, time, effort, and money into creatively teaching our kids and our youth. Lynn and Mitch and our volunteers do an amazing job.

And we hope you are blessed by how your kids are growing in their heart understanding of God's Word, and even what that looks like to live it out every day. But we also want you to know that your children and your grandchildren need more than just Sunday morning or Wednesday night at church.

There are 168 hours in a week. That means that we have them in classes for somewhere between one and four hours a week, depending how much they come.

[6 : 00] So what happens with the rest of these hours? Well, it all starts with the foundation that's laid at home. And you don't have to be a Bible scholar either. There are all kinds of resources that you can get, even some free stuff here at the church that we purchase, so that you can have that can help you.

In fact, there's a story that I've never forgotten that a fellow ministry colleague shared with me. One day a couple came in to donate some books to the church library.

And as they were going through them to decide what to keep, they came upon this religion book that basically taught universalism. This idea that all roads lead to heaven.

A concept that absolutely goes against exactly what God's Word teaches, that Jesus is the only way. And this is what this Christian couple had for their children to read as they grew up, and they seemed pretty proud of it.

And I don't mean this harshly at all, but none of their kids follow Jesus now as adults. And I'm not here to pick on them, but to use it as a cautionary tale that what happens at home matters.

[7 : 10] Because God has designed the family unit as the most powerful training ground on earth. Let me show you how the Word puts this. Go ahead and turn with me here to the book of Deuteronomy.

Fifth book of your Bible. Five big books there. So Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. Then you come to Deuteronomy. And here we see the Israelites in the wilderness having just received the Ten Commandments.

Moses is sharing what God desires of his people. And here's what it says starting in Deuteronomy 6.1. These are the commands, decrees, and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

So that you, your children, and their children after them may fear the Lord God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you so that you may enjoy long life.

So we see the value of God's Word and following that. Verse 5. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength.

[8 : 23] These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Now listen to this. Verse 7. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up.

See, as much as we want to come alongside you, that is our passion. As much as we want to pour truth into your children when we gather together, which we do, the most important training ground will always be the home.

And so many studies have been done that pretty much say the same thing. If the home is a place where parents, grandparents, guardians are actively seeking the heart of God themselves and then pouring into children, raising them up to follow Jesus, this sincere environment of loving God with all your heart, soul, and strength, it is amazing how many of those kids will grow up, that faith will stick,

and they'll continue to live for Christ.

On the other hand, when we just come for the church service and we kind of put our Bible and put our Jesus away until next Sunday, it's never in our conversations, we don't necessarily talk about it or try to live it a whole lot, that's when it often doesn't stick.

And that's so, so easy to do. But listen, our children need to see us pursue Him as imperfectly as we will. They need to see a sincerity in our faith.

[9 : 51] So start with those conversations. What did that passage just say to us? Impress the Word of God on your children. When you're at home, when you walk along the road, for us that'd be probably in the car, when you lie down for bed, when you get up in the morning, what does that cover?

All the time, right? Talk about God's faithfulness. Lean on His promises. Get in His Word together. Show your children their identity in Christ.

Share His blessings that you're grateful to have. And when you mess up, say those powerful words that so many adults just can't seem to say.

Say, I'm sorry. Church, I can't tell you how many times I've had to apologize to my children. I have the tendency when things are going crazy to lose my cool. And so I want them to know that, no, I'm not perfect.

But when I make a mistake, I'm going to repent. I'm going to ask for forgiveness. And I like this quote by Carolyn Mahaney. She said, See, church, while there's nothing wrong with wanting our children to do well in school, to be a good athlete, a musician, a singer, whatever, to someday be successful in a career, that's okay to want that.

[11 : 23] But as Christians, we must stop prioritizing those things over our children knowing and walking with Jesus. See, that's the only thing that will matter in the end.

And when their hearts are right with Him, He will lead the rest of it. He will take care of the rest. And they will walk in His will for their lives, which is way better than anything I could wish for them.

Being successful, having money, getting a full-ride scholarship, even going pro, will never fill that God-shaped hole that each of us have in our heart that only Jesus Christ can fill.

And maybe right now you're thinking, Ray, I've really dropped the ball in this area. Well, listen, I didn't come here to make you feel bad or to rub salt in the wound. What's that old saying?

The best time to plant a tree was, what, 20, 50 years ago? The second best time is today. So let's change those mindsets now. Let's make our homes those training grounds for godliness.

[12 : 22] Maybe now you're a grandparent, so pour truth and godliness into your grandkids like never before. It starts at home. And our heart as a leadership at FCC comes from Ephesians 4, starting in verse 11 that says this, So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers to do what?

To equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God.

Now watch this. And become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. This is why we want to pour into families, so that adults can pour back into kids, and we can create this powerful training ground that will change the world for Christ.

And then second, family as a support system. Some of you were born into a wonderful family and support system. You were blessed to be raised in a healthy environment.

That doesn't mean life has always been easy for you. It doesn't mean that you've made all the right decisions. But you were blessed in that way. But I also know there are some listening to this who suffered as kids because of parents and guardians who were lost, who were fighting battles, turning to all the wrong places to do so.

[13 : 51] I'm sorry for what you've gone through and the scars that it's probably produced, but guess what? You're still standing. You're not defeated. And God can turn that mess into a message of hope in your life and those he puts in your path.

And today I want you to know you have a family here at First Christian Church of Greensburg. You have a support system that you can grow into the man or the woman of God that you were designed to be.

No matter your color of skin. No matter your past, your pain. No matter your status in the community. No matter whether your color is white or blue. Whether you're a kid, a senior citizen, or somewhere in between.

No matter whether you can put a lot in the offering plate or little, you belong to this family. And we want to do more than just Sunday morning.

We want to get connected to other Bible-believing, like-minded disciples of Jesus who are pursuing his heart. I want to tell you about a young lady in our church who's in her early 30s.

[14:57] Her family's been coming for a few years now. And she has an intense fire to grow in Christ. I've been so impressed. And I watched her reach out to a few women in our church who may just be a season ahead of her in life.

Just a few years older. Not that much. Maybe 6, 7, 8, 10 years. And they now meet about every week to study the Word together, to grow together, to do life together. And I love seeing the body of Christ come together like this to offer each other encouragement and accountability, a support system.

I've got to tell you, that is such a biblical model that she has put in place. And I know that's been exciting. I know it's been exciting seeing this body of believers grow in numbers the last few years. But hear me, numerical growth matters because each person matters to God. But if we're not going in the right direction towards spiritual maturity together, it doesn't matter how many people we cram into these facilities.

Actually, I really like how John MacArthur put this. He said, external criteria such as affluence, numbers, money, or a positive response have never been the biblical measure of success in ministry.

[16:12] Faithfulness, godliness, and spiritual commitment are the virtues that God esteems. And then we even look at a passage like Hebrews 10, 24 and 25 that shares with us the role that you and I both play in this.

It says, Now, what did that say?

As you see the day approaching of Christ's return. I don't know exactly when this is going to be.

We're actually told that we won't, even though a lot of people would like to predict it.

But the lights are sure getting dimmer, aren't they? The world's running to ungodly extremes, celebrating the murdering of innocent babies, all kinds of sexual immorality that I never imagined seeing, greed, pride, hatred, lies.

The list goes on. And if you're going to be able to stand your ground, stay faithful to Christ and live for Him, you can't do this on your own. You need a support system.

[17:27] The other day I ran across this meme that I thought was just absolutely genius. And here's what it says. Since you're on the radio, it's kind of hard to show you this. But it says, If I'm a Christian, but I don't need the church was a photo.

And it's a photo of a kind of a pack of zebra, a herd of zebra, and then one that's probably about 100 feet away from the others, and there's a lion chasing it.

Okay? And it's showing that, listen, yeah, Satan is looking to devour you because you are a threat to his kingdom. That's why you got to stay in the pack. That's why you stay connected to the church.

And you know what? That's why 1 Peter 5, 8, 9 puts it like this. Be alert and have sober mind. In other words, have a clear mind in Christ. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

It says, Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And how do you resist Satan, standing firm in your faith?

[18:35] By getting serious about Jesus. By getting immersed in the church, the body of Christ. Finding your people where you help each other stay on the straight and narrow.

Where you encourage each other when life is hard. Where you celebrate together when life is good. Where you hold each other accountable when you start to get too big for your spiritual britches. You know, I think if we were able to go back and interview the early Christians in the book of Acts and ask them, how did you hold on?

How did you stay faithful in such intense persecution? I mean, many of them died for their faith. And I feel pretty confident from reading God's word that their answer would go something like this.

First, it was only by the grace of God. The Holy Spirit's leading that held me up. The Lord was always enough. And then they would point to their army of God around them.

Their brothers and sisters in Christ. Their support system. The family of God that we are meant to be an active part of. And then third, family is a people of compassion.

[19 : 42] Family is a people of compassion. Because of God's mercy on us, we should be a people of compassion toward others. 1 John 3, 16-18.

This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

Dear children, let us not love with mere words or speech, but with actions and in truth. And then Proverbs 14, 31 even says, whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker.

But whoever is kind to the needy honors God. You know, God's Word always talks about widows and orphans and those who are treated unjustly as well.

We want to be a church that loves and meets needs, showing the world the love of Christ and the reality that this church family cares about them. And that's one reason why I'm so proud of this church family.

[20 : 49] Every year in December, on Giveaway Sunday, the outpouring of love and generosity towards those in our communities that need legitimate help is absolutely amazing.

And God has used you to impact lives for Christ. But here's the cool thing. That generous heart, it's not new to this church family. It's always been a part of it.

Way before any of us were alive. And going back to 1928, two faithful members, married Francis and Mary Adams, had such a heart for the needy in Greensburg, that they pleaded with this church family to take up a special offering and start a fund for benevolence.

We still have it today. Named after this couple, it's called the Adams Fund. Not the Adams family, but the Adams Fund, okay? And while you don't always see all the assistance that happens behind the scenes in our church family and in our community because there has to be that privacy element, I can tell you that Pastor Steve does a great job of discerning God's leading and giving out of the fund wisely to those in need.

Before him, it was Cliff Wiesner who did a great job with this. And even more important than paying a bill for someone is displaying the love of Christ in a very real way, showing them that they don't have to do life on their own.

[22 : 09] You know, there's an important part of the family of God here, and that's being together. See, family is our passion. And I love how God has uniquely designed this church family because as we've talked about, while every church should have their foundation on the Word of God, we each have a unique spiritual DNA.

Not every church is meant to look the same because we have a big world to reach. And one thing I love about our DNA is that every person of every age matters to us.

From that big influx of babies we had born in the church last year that we all got excited about to our golden rule and joyful hard Sunday school classes that continue to show us what a faithful life walking with Jesus looks like.

So because our family is our passion, know that we're going to encourage every generation to intermingle. Don't just hang out with your own age group. You have so much to learn from others. Get to know them. They may look a little funny. They may have hair that's a little too short or long or long gone. Whose clothes may look a little weird and you may just discover that you both have something to offer each other.

[23 : 22] Let me give you an example of this. When I was in my mid-twenties, I was introduced to a pastor who was in his sixties who quickly became my friend and dear mentor.

This guy was leading a large church and doing it very well. So for me, it was a win-win because he had all that experience to speak into this green young pastor.

But I just couldn't understand how I could benefit him. What would he need from me? I had nothing to offer, I thought. Well, one day after he passed away and he kind of passed away suddenly from a disease and his wife after that said to me, she said, you had no idea how much you energized his last few years of ministry because of your youth and your excitement.

and he had been doing it for so long that you just kind of helped to energize him and it was contagious and he needed that. So let's be that family where we realize we need one another in all age brackets, where we are committed to equipping you to raise up godly generations behind you, where you're going to stay connected and be that support system that we need.

And we're going to keep showing compassion and welcoming others into this loving family. Will you pray with me, please? Heavenly Father, thank you so much for just speaking these words of hope

and life into us today.

[24 : 54] Thank you that you have uniquely designed FCC, that family is our passion and that's all ages, all generations.

So Father, I just pray that you will help us to continue to pour into our youngest among us and that you will help us to truly just train them up to know you.

I pray that we will be wise to put a support system of other believers around our hearts so that we can grow and become the child of God we're meant to be.

And Father, I pray we also will always protect and take care of the oldest among us that we may show them the respect that they deserve, that we may listen to the wisdom that they have to impart.

And Father, we just may love them in those last years. And Father, I just pray that right now as we continue working through our mission and our vision and our values, that you will just give us a fire to love this world into the arms of Christ.

[26 : 02] So Father, give us that desire to reach out and to be your hands and your feet in everything we do. We pray this in Jesus' precious and holy name. And God's people said, Amen and Amen.

Hey, real quick, invitation here. If you've been listening to this, maybe you have questions about your faith, maybe you have questions about giving your life to Jesus, maybe you just got, you know, other questions about the church.

I don't know. But if you have anything you'd like to run by us, we would love as a church just to come alongside you and to be that support system, to be that family that we've talked about today.

So here's a couple ways you can reach out. You can call the church office, 812-663-8488, 812-663-8488, or you can email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com.

Once again, my name is Ray Sweet, the lead pastor here at First Christian Church of Greensburg, and I hope and pray that you have a fantastic week.