



FAMILY

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HeartLine
CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH





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LESSON 1

WHAT HEALTHY FAMILIES DO

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Get Healthy: Family

Lesson One: What Healthy Families Do

Ask any woman, any age, to talk about her most important relationships, and nine times out of ten she'll talk about her family. Our deepest joys, and our deepest heartaches, are inseparably linked to our "people", as my southern relatives like to call their kin.

Our people.

It's an apt description of the family. For no matter where we go (or where *they* go), or what we do (or what *they* do), our family is forever ours. For good or for bad, those closest to us form how we think, how we relate, how we communicate, and how we function.

Which is why it is so vital to know how to create an emotionally, spiritually and relationally healthy family.

So, with the goal of creating a healthy family in mind, let's begin at the beginning.

- 1. Let's talk about *your* beginning. What good thing(s) did you receive from your family of origin? What good thing(s) did you fail to receive? How has this affected your concept of a healthy family? What are you looking forward to most from studying this Get Healthy session on family?**

True confession: I can't think of beginnings without the hearing the lyrics of "Do-Re-Mi" from *The Sound of Music*, in my head. You know the ones: "Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start". Yeah. So now you're humming it, too.

Why should we start at the beginning, especially since the beginning was so, *so* long ago? A peek at the beginning gives us a glimpse of how families—including yours—were *meant* to function. In a world where families struggle to function at all, much less function in a healthy way, examining God's original design is crucial. Like seeing the completed picture on the cover of a puzzle box, a glimpse of God's design gives us a picture of how God wants the to family function in a way where every member is connected, valued, cared for, and loved.

- 2. Read Genesis 2:18-25, which is the beginning of the first family, and answer the following questions.**

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

¹⁸ The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹ Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam, no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

*"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."*

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

a. What did God say was not good in verse 18? What did this propel God to do? What does this tell you about how the family is intended to meet our aloneness need?

b. Why do you think God had Adam name the animals before he made Eve? Look closely at the end of verse 20. What was the result?

c. How do you think the exercise in naming the animals heightened Adam's awareness of his need for a partner? How do you think this might have affected her value in his eyes? What does this tell you about how family relationships are meant to meet our desire to be valued and wanted?

d. Twice the passage describes the woman as a "suitable helper". In other words, Eve was *needed*. How do you think this speaks to our need to be appreciated?

e. Examine Adam's response when God brought Eve to him (v 23) at little more closely. Fill in the blanks below.

*The man _____,
"This is now bone of _____ bone, and flesh of _____ flesh".*

f. Did Adam *think* these things or *say* these things? Why do you think that's important?

g. How does his response express affirmation and acceptance? How does it address the need to feel a sense of belonging? Do you think Adam viewed Eve as his equal partner? Why or why not?

h. Read verses 24 and 25, below. Underline the words and phrase that address the unity the first family experienced.

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

"

- i. **After reading about the beginning of the first family unit, do you think they experienced authentic intimacy? Why or why not?**
- j. **Do you think Eve felt accepted? Do you think Eve felt desired?**
- k. **Do you think Adam felt accepted and desired? Why or why not?**
- l. **Look at verses 15-17 more closely. Healthy people have healthy boundaries. How did God's instructions give them opportunity to learn appropriate boundaries? Does this shed new light on why God placed one forbidden tree in the garden? If so, how?**

Ok, so let's see how the Biblical narrative relates to our—to *your*—family's needs right now.

- 3. **What needs do you think a healthy family meets for its members? Make a list.**

I'm guessing your list probably included things like a sense of belonging; connectedness; value; acceptance; love. And you'd be right.

Did you know that every need the human soul requires to be healthy is present in the founding of the first family? A healthy family meets:

- Our need to connect (aloneness need)
- Our need to be valued
- Our need to be appreciated
- Our need to be needed
- Our need to be wanted
- Our need to belong

- Our need to bond
- Our need to be known
- Our need to be unified
- Our need for acceptance
- Our need for affirmation
- Our need for intimacy
- Our need to be desired
- Our need for appropriate boundaries

I'm fairly certain your sense of wellbeing about your family of origin can be traced *directly* to whether or not these needs were met. I'm also certain that the extent to which these needs are met in your current family (as far as humanly possible) affects the health of the family, *right now*.

Ultimately, God meets our needs, but in His original design, He created the family through which He meets them. If family doesn't meet these needs, people look elsewhere. This is why it's essential to be proactive in how we relate as a family.

4. So let's jump right in, and assess the health of our family relationships. Using the list above as your guide, how well do you think your family is meeting the need for:

a. Connection?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

b. Value?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

c. Appreciation?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

d. Belonging?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

e. Bonding?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

f. Being Known?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

g. Unity?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

h. Acceptance?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

i. Affirmation?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

j. Intimacy (Emotional &/or Physical)

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

k. Being Wanted/Desired?

1 (not at all)_____10 (highly)

If this leaves you discouraged, overwhelmed, or defeated, because your family isn't perfect, *please hang in there*. As you certainly already know, Adam and Eve's family didn't stay perfect for long, either.

From that day, to this, no family is perfect; so your family and my family won't be, either. *But it can be healthy*. And that's where we're going...

But before we end, let's explore just one more thing.

5. Who initiated creating Adam? Creating Eve? Who brought Eve to Adam? What does this tell you about how many members make a healthy family?

If you answered "three" you are right. We typically think a family becomes a family when there's a man, a woman, and a child. But a healthy family is composed of two individuals and *God*.

If you are a believer, *God is* a part of your family, even if He's sometimes an overlooked member. Since God is part of your family, He is committed to do His part to help you live out the purpose He desires for your family. **Take a moment to pray and commit to do your part, as well.**

Life Application:

1. Look back over your assessment of how your family is currently meeting the needs of its members. Pick one area that is not as healthy as it should be; be proactive in addressing this area this week. Be ready to share with your group.
2. One of the most powerful things my family of origin did for me, and JP and I have done for our family, is pray. I don't say this flippantly. Prayer has been genuinely pivotal in creating a healthy family. Because I've seen the first hand effects of prayer, I want you to, also. Beginning this week, pray for each family member, every day. Your prayer doesn't have to be long or fancy, just heartfelt.
3. Pray for yourself. You can't *make* your family members healthy, but you can make a healthy contribution to provide for their needs. Commit to be the "suitable helper" your family members need to thrive. Make a conscious decision that during the next five weeks you will seek to meet the emotional, spiritual and physical needs of your family, rather than seek to have your family members meet yours. (You're the one in this Bible study, after all ☺.)
4. **Optional:** Look back over the assessment in question four, considering each family member, individually. Often a need will be met for one family member, but not for another. Take time to note whose needs have fallen through the cracks—and how.

Optional: Further Reading, Reflection and Bible Study

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31, which is the description of an excellent wife. Make a list of what she does. Hint: Her actions can be divided into 1) her character 2) how she relates to her husband 3) how she cares for family 3) her work/professional ethic 4) how she cares for the needy
2. Re-read Proverbs 31:10-12 and 28-31. What stands out to you from these verses?

