



FAMILY

LESSON 5

THE FAMILY THAT
PRAYS-AND PLAYS-TOGETHER,
STAYS TOGETHER

HeartLine
CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH





Get Healthy: Family

Lesson Five: The Family that Prays—and Plays—Together, Stays Together

Looking Back: 10 Minutes

1. What healthy conflict principles did you put into practice this week? How did it affect the conflict and/or your relationship?
2. Were there moments you did not handle conflict in a healthy way this week? If so, did you apologize and seek to make things right? How did it change the relational dynamic? In retrospect, what could you have done differently?
3. Share the most valuable lessons you've learned from *Get Healthy: Family*.

Looking Forward: 50 Minutes

"I love you and I like you".

I can't recall the exact moment JP coined this phrase, but I do remember how our kid's faces lit up each time he spoke the words.

So I stole them. And made them my own. I must have said these words a thousand times over the years.

Because that's what you do when you find something someone else does that makes a relationship healthier. You steal it. Copy it. Do it. Repeat it. Until one day, it's not something *someone else* does; it's something *you* do.

This is the beauty of being part of *Get Healthy: Family*; the material is designed to help each of us think, *Oh that's how healthy families function. I can do that!* This is also why it's vital to stay connected to a healthy community, and healthy people, even after *Get Healthy: Family* ends. No one becomes healthy in isolation. We get healthy by being with healthy people, who do life in healthy ways.

This week we turn our attention toward creating a family whose members love each other and like each other, because that's how truly healthy families function, and feel.

I love you. And I like you.

Thankfully, it's not as complicated as you might think.

1. Proverbs 17:22 says:

“ A joyful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

a. What is good for you and good for your family?

b. What is not good for you, or your family?

Have you ever heard, “laughter is the best medicine”? Now you know where the phrase originated—right here in Proverbs 17:22!

There’s good reason this phrase gained notoriety. Medicine makes sick people healthy. If a joyful heart is good medicine (and it is!), then a joyful heart is a healing balm for an unhealthy family.

Laughter is an indicator of family health and marital health.

2. On a scale from 1-10 (low to high), how fun is your family? How would your husband, children, or grandchildren answer this question?

a. How often do you laugh together: Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Never.

b. Do you regularly play together as a couple? As a family? If not, why not? What stops you? Be specific.

People bond over shared activities. That’s why we bond with our co-workers, or parents on our child’s sports team, for example. Further, the more often positive feelings are associated with the shared activity, the more positive the relationship. So, if work is going well, relationships with co-workers probably are, too. If the sports team is winning, the players and parents feel connected in a positive way. Doesn’t it make sense then, to make space for our family members to bond with each other through shared fun, positive activities?

The family that plays together stays together.

And here’s the beautiful part: Laughter and play are free. Vacations and weekend getaways are nice, (I’m a huge advocate of both. You can’t beat the bonding that takes place when it’s just you, and your family, without interruption) but a healthy

family makes simple things fun. They laugh around the table. They dance in the kitchen. They snuggle on the sofa while they watch TV. They wrestle on the family room floor. They play games. They shoot hoops. They make cookies. They enjoy hobbies. They go on walks, or bike rides, or a thousand other simple things that make life fun. Smart families give their attention to each other, not their smart phones.

- a. **Write down one thing you will do this week to help your family have fun together:** _____

Your family's idea of fun might be different from another family's idea of fun. What you do for fun together isn't important; that you do have fun together is. If we cultivate joy within our homes, we won't have to look for joy outside our homes. Your home will be a place your people will want to be.

3. Read Nehemiah 8:10, written below, and answer the following questions.

Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

- a. **True or False: God doesn't want his people to enjoy things.** _____
- b. **True or False: It's hard for me to think of God as a joyful God.** _____
- c. **According to Nehemiah 8:10b, what does the joy of the Lord bring?**
- d. **Think of the strongest families you know. Are they joyful? How can you tell?**
- e. **Are their lives always trouble free?**
- f. **I'm guessing you answered "no" to the question above. If being problem-free isn't a requirement to be a strong, healthy family, what does this tell you about the capacity to be a joy-filled family, even if life is sometimes messy, hard, and imperfect?**

4. **James says 1:16-17 says, “Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”**
- a. **According to this passage, who gives us every good gift?**
- b. **How would living aware that God gives you, and your family, every good gift, help your family:**
- **Be more grateful to God?**
 - **Live more mindful of God?**
 - **Have a more positive view of God?**
- c. **List a few of the good gifts God has given you and your family. Don’t limit your list to material gifts. Think also about relational gifts, emotional gifts, physical gifts, social gifts, spiritual gifts, etc.**

So let’s recap, and make this easy:

- God gives good gifts.
- One of God’s best gifts is joy.
- The joy of the Lord is your strength.
- Strength and joy are the hallmarks of emotional, relational, spiritual and familial health.

A joyful heart is the medicine unhealthy families need to be healthy.

But I can almost hear what some of you are thinking: *Well, that’s all fine and good, but my family is filled with dysfunction. Abuse. Hurt. Anger. Addiction. So, where are the good gifts God seems to give everyone else, but me?*

Oh, sweet friend, how desperately I want you to experience all the goodness God intends for you, and your family! But more important, *God* wants you to experience His goodness toward you. (Yes, *you*. The one whose heart has been wounded so many times you're almost scared to hope for good gifts) Right now, would you—could you—crack open the door of your heart just a smidge, so God can pour the light of His love, His mercy, His hope and His truth, into your wounded places?

That fact that you are reading these words, in this moment, is an indicator God is at work in your life, and therefore, He's at work in your family, too. Let's see if we can shed light on why not every family experiences the joy God intends.

5. Read Jesus' words recorded in John 10:10, written below.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;
I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

- a. **What did Jesus come to give us? What did Jesus come to give *you*?**

- b. **What does our enemy (the thief, Satan) intend to do? List the three things your enemy wants to do to you, and your family.**

- c. **Can you identify any way in which Satan is seeking to kill, steal, and/or destroy you, your family, or your family member *right now*? Use the list below as your guide.**
 - **We are too busy to really connect with each other**
 - **We have unresolved conflict, and issues we haven't dealt with**
 - **We often don't make time for church**
 - **We aren't on the same page (parenting, sex, money, parents, schedule)**
 - **We have lots of tension in our home, and very little fun**
 - **We've become critical of one another**
 - **Technology often keeps us from face-to-face interaction**
 - **We complain over small things**
 - **We deal with addiction or mental health issues**
 - **We are disconnected from other Christians**
 - **We have a family member who is making poor choices**
 - **We have a rebellious child**
 - **We have a dysfunctional or difficult extended family member**
 - **We have financial debt**
 - **We live under constant pressure**
 - **We deal with problems at school or at work**
 - **We have secrets, lying and integrity issues**
 - **We rarely have sex**
 - **Other**

- d. **It's one thing to realize Satan is trying to destroy your family; it's another thing to allow him to do it. So, now we're going deep, ok? (After five weeks together, it's time.) Can you identify *any way you have allowed* Satan to kill, steal, or destroy your family's unity, joy, intimacy, communication, connection to God, emotional, relational, or spiritual health?**

- e. **If you answered yes, what will you do about it? (It's not enough to know a thief is robbing your home; you have to stop him from robbing your home!)**

If I could sit with you face to face, here's what I'd want you to know: ***Jesus wants to help you.*** He wants to infuse you with hope. He came that you would have life, (eternal life if He is your Savior, and abundant life if He is your Lord) ***but you have to let him.*** You must choose to do things His way.

I'd also want you to know this: **you can only do your part; you can't do someone else's part.** Allow Jesus to make *you* healthy. As we discussed in lesson one, healthy families are made up of healthy people. We must start at the right place: with ourselves.

So, now let's turn a corner. We've discussed how people bond over shared experiences, especially positive ones. We've seen how our enemy seeks to destroy those positive bonds. Let's look at how this works itself out, more specifically.

- 6. The Bible mentions only two places Satan can get a "foothold" into our relationships First, in unresolved conflict ("Don't let the sun go down on your anger. Anger gives a foothold to the devil." Ephesians 4: 27). The second one is found in 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 (NLT), written below.**

"But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.³ The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. ⁴ The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife.⁵ Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you (get a foothold) because of your lack of self-control."

Families bond through fun. Couples bond through sex.

- a. According to verses 2 and 5b, why should you make sexual intimacy a priority in your marriage?
- b. How does verse 3 describe sex? Fill in the blanks:
“The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual _____, and the wife should fulfill her husband’s sexual _____.”
- c. A need is different from a want, or a desire, isn’t it? Wants are optional; needs are essential. Does it surprise you that God talks about our sexuality as a need?
- d. When is it acceptable to refrain from sexual intimacy according to verse 5?

Throughout the course of a lifetime together, there will be times when sexual intimacy must be put on hold: after the birth of a child, or because of an illness or physical limitation, for example. But even in these moments, when sexual intimacy takes a back seat, relational intimacy shouldn’t.

Not if you want your marriage, and your family, to remain healthy.

Sex is a gift from God—a good gift! I once heard a speaker say “single women tend to over value sex; married women tend to under value sex.” I wish you could have heard the crowd’s response. She clearly hit a nerve.

7. God created sex to bond a husband and wife for at least six reasons. Look up the following scriptures, and note what each teaches about the purpose of sex. Match each verses with the purpose written below.

___ Genesis 1:28

___ Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31-33

___ Genesis 4:1 (hint: your version may say “made love”, but in the original Hebrew, the word is “knew”)

___ 2 Samuel 12:24; Genesis 24:67

___ Proverbs 5:18-19

___ 1 Corinthians 7:2, 5

- a. **Pleasure**
- b. **Procreation**
- c. **Comfort/relieve stress**
- d. **Defense against temptation**
- e. **Intimate knowledge**
- f. **Oneness**

God purposed our sexuality to be the ultimate positive experience—one that would bond one man, to one woman, for life.

If this area of your life leaves something to be desired, please know there is hope. You aren't the only one. Please take time to review the lessons on talking, listening, and resolving conflict. Sex is 10% physical, and 90% mental/relational.

In today's culture, many—if not most—people struggle in some area of their sexual expression or satisfaction. Don't be content to allow the enemy to steal, kill, or destroy what God intended as a gift for your good. I've included some helpful resources at the end of this lesson for additional information on this important topic.

Families bond through fun. Couples bond through sex. Everyone bonds through communication, affection, and understanding. These are the ways we support each other. Build each other. Take care of each other.

Love each other.

But there's one final way families become healthy: **God is the centerpiece, not the add-on.**

8. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9, written below, and answer the following questions

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.⁵ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

- a. **In verse 4, The Lord is called whose God? "The Lord ____ God, the Lord is one."**

- b. How are you cultivating the knowledge that “that the Lord is *our* God” with your family?**
- c. Do you talk about God with your family? If not, why not? What’s the roadblock?**
- d. Do you talk about what God is doing in your life, personally?**

In my experience, even if people feel uncomfortable talking about God, they’re open to hear what God is teaching you, how God answered a prayer, or how God worked on your behalf. Sharing personal experience moves the conversation from what could be perceived as a lecture, to what can be received as a life-changing relationship.

God has good intentions for you and your family. He wants you to know Him, and love Him, because He knows you, and loves you, already. God wants all people, over all time, to understand His great love. This is why He instructs parents to pass it on to their children, so those children can pass it on to their children, and so on.

God made families. God loves families.

God made *your* family. God loves *your* family.

God wants your family to be healthy, and holy, and whole. He wants you to love each other, listen to each other, talk to each other, work through conflict with each other, enjoy each other, and love Him, with each other.

These things, sweet friend, are what healthy families actually do.

And what do you do when you find something someone else does that makes a relationship healthier? You steal it. Copy it. Do it. Repeat it.

Until one day, it’s not something *someone else* does; it’s something *you* do.

Life Application:

- 1. Review the material in *Get Healthy: Family*. Choose one thing you will commit to improve to help your family become healthier.**
- 2. Pray for your family members every day. Your prayer doesn't have to be long—just heartfelt. Pray for your family member's relational and spiritual lives. Pray for yourself to be emotionally and spiritually healthy, so you can bring emotional and spiritual health to your family.**

Additional Resources:

1. *Intimate Issues* by Loraine Pintus and Linda Dillow
2. *Sheet Music* by Dr. Kevin Leman
3. *The Good Girls Guide to Great Sex* by Sheila Wray Gregorie
4. Blog: www.authenticintimacy.com