

SERMON NOTES
Matthew 22:34-40; 28:18-20
“Raising a Five-Purpose Family”

Intro:

- A teacher had just given her second-grade class a lesson on magnets
- Then she reinforced the lesson with a riddle: *My name starts with an M, and I pick up things. What am I?*
- A little boy raised his hand and replied instantly: *A Mother*
- Which reminds me of a saying seen on a church sign: *If evolution is true, how come mothers still have only two hands?*
- There is nothing like becoming a mother to learn the Christ-like quality of servanthood
- *But mothers are also among the world’s most influential leaders*
- Theodore Roosevelt: *When all is said, it is the mother, and the mother only, who is a better citizen than the soldier who fights for his country. The successful mother, the mother who does her part in rearing and training aright the boys and girls who are to be the men and women of the next generation, is of greater use to the community, and occupies – if she would only realize it – a more honorable as well as a more important position than any man in it. The mother is the one supreme asset of the national life. She is more important, by far, than the successful statesman, or businessman, or artist, or scientist.*
- Tony Campolo: “When I was on the faculty of the Univ. of Pennsylvania, from time to time there were social gatherings for faculty and spouses. Inevitably, some woman lawyer or sociologist would ask my wife, “*And what is it that you do, my dear?*”
- “My wife, who is one of the most brilliantly articulate individuals I know, had a great response: *I am socializing two homo sapiens in the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition in order that they might be instruments for the transformation of the social order into the teleologically prescribed utopia inherent in the Eschaton.*” (agents of social change in the service of the coming Kingdom of God)
- When she followed that with: *And what is it that you do?* The other person’s “*a lawyer*” just wasn’t that overpowering.”
- Mothers: *And what is it that you do?*
- What are you raising your kids for? For what purpose?
- *Not just HOW are you raising your kids – what methods are you using – but what are you raising your kids for? For what purpose?*
- *What is the ultimate goal of your parenting? What is God’s purpose for your parenting?*

- **Goal of Purpose-Driven Parenting:** *Developing our children into fully devoted followers of Jesus who will fulfill God's Purposes of Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry and Evangelism.*
- There is no more important job in life than raising a Five-Purpose Family that will be able to impact the world for the Kingdom of God
- There are two pre-requisites for the job:
- *You do not need to be perfect – you can have your share of flaws and make your share of mistakes – but there are these two requirements:*
- **(1) A personal, growing love relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ**
--you cannot teach your children what you are not experiencing
- **(2) A strong, healthy love-bond with your children**
--in order for a child to identify with her parents and accept their beliefs, values and standards – the child must feel genuinely loved and accepted by her parents
- What are the Five Purposes that our children need to fulfill in order to become fully devoted followers of Jesus who are fulfilling God's purpose for their lives?

I. **WORSHIP: LOVING THE LORD OUR GOD (Matthew 22:35-38)**

- *What is the supreme purpose of life? What on earth are you here for? And Why were your children born?*
- Self-centered creatures that we are – we assume that life is all about me – or at least all about me and my family and my career
- *We search for life's purpose beginning at the wrong starting point – ourselves*
- **If you want to know why you were placed on this planet – and why your children were born – you must begin with God the Creator, not Self the creature**
- Rick Warren: *You were made BY God and FOR God – and until you understand that, life will never make sense. It is only in a love relationship with God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny.*
- When asked what is the one most important thing in life, Jesus replied:

Matthew 22:37 - 38 (NIV) ³⁷Jesus replied: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”** ³⁸**This is the first and greatest commandment.”**

- *What are you raising your kids for?*
- **First and foremost – to love God with all their heart and soul and mind and strength**
- *Your children were made for a love relationship with God*

- *The purpose of life is to know and love and worship God – and our children will find their greatest joy and satisfaction in life in fulfilling this purpose*
- Worship is more than singing songs in a church service
- **Any time we engage our heart, mind, soul and body in loving God – we are worshipping God and bringing Him pleasure**
- It is possible to worship God even when you are nowhere near a church building or worship service – and conversely – *it is possible to be sitting in a pew in a church service and yet not be worshipping God*
- *The heart must be engaged in seeking and loving God in order for true worship to be taking place*
- **Teaching your children to love and worship God begins with your own passion to love and worship God**
- Regular participation in church worship services is essential and foundational
- **Jealously guard Sunday mornings as a sacred time devoted to expressing love and honor and devotion to God in worship with His people**
- It is important to let your children see you enjoying worship and singing and delighting in the Lord's presence and worshipping the Lord with some enthusiasm and passion
- *Cultivating a heart for God and a heart for worship and a heart for living for God's glory begins with congregational worship – but it doesn't stop there*
- When you are outdoors in God's creation – express your wonder and adoration at God's creativity and beauty and design that are seen throughout His creation
- *When you are in the car – listen to some Christian music that your children will enjoy – or spend some time praying together*
- If you're driving them to school or to an activity – pray God's blessing on them
- *As your children begin to manifest God-given abilities and strengths and skills – make the connection to using those abilities for God's glory and purposes*

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) ³¹So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

- **As often as you can – in as many ways as you can – train your children to connect all of life with God and His purposes**
- *Teach them that Life is all about God and loving God – and that it is in the process of loving God that we experience fullness of life and joy and satisfaction*

II. FELLOWSHIP: LOVING OUR SPIRITUAL FAMILY (John 13:34-35)

- Do you realize that the only things in life that last forever are your relationship with God and with your spiritual family?

- *And it is our love for our spiritual family of our brothers and sisters in Christ that proves that we belong to Jesus Christ*

John 13:34 - 35 (NIV) ³⁴“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

- *One of the most important biblical values that you want to teach your children is to love and value and be loyal to the spiritual family in which God has placed you*
- Just as we do not get to choose our physical siblings – so also we do not get to choose our spiritual siblings
- *We are born again into a spiritual family of God’s choosing*
- Some of the people in that spiritual family will be kindred spirits whom we would choose to be good friends of ours – others we would never choose as close friends
- *Some of the people in that spiritual family will be strong, healthy, vibrant Christians who lead consistent and Christ-like lives and always treat us with kindness and consideration and respect – Others – not so much*
- But whether Spirit-filled Christian or carnal Christian – compatible personality or personality clash – *identical beliefs and values and interests and lifestyles – or quite dissimilar – the command is clear: Love one another as Jesus Christ has loved us*
- Every mother desires for all her children to love one another and to treat each other with kindness and respect – *so does our heavenly Father*
- Every family has some problems – and almost all siblings occasionally fight and quarrel – some on a regular basis
- *Sometimes it’s hard to get along*
- But giving up on family relationships whenever there is hurt or disappointment or conflict or disagreement is not an option
- We have been very blessed as a family and are very pleased with the young women our girls have grown into – but you need to know that our family has certainly not been conflict-free – and still isn’t
- *Our girls all love Jesus and they love each other and they are desiring to live in accordance with God’s will and biblical truth – but sometimes the hardest place to put biblical truth into practice is in family relationships*
- But not working through conflict and not reconciling relationships is not an option in a Christian family
- *And often the most strategic growth points where God is at work in conforming us to the likeness of His Son are revealed in the midst of working through conflict in family relationships*
- ***Same with our spiritual family***

- **God places us in churches in order to teach us how to love our spiritual family**
- He places us in close fellowship with imperfect people who occasionally irritate us or hurt our feelings or try our patience or frustrate us or disappoint us or offend us -- or who even sin against us – *so that we will learn how to practice patience, kindness, forgiveness and self-control in real-life relationships*
- Just as all families fall short of the ideal – so do all church families
- ***But God’s purposes for our spiritual development are not thwarted or hindered by the imperfections of our spiritual siblings – to the contrary – God uses those imperfections to train us in practicing Christ-like love toward those who are sometimes hard to love***
- **The church where God places you is your spiritual family – and while you can choose your friends – you don’t choose your family – you just love and accept them**
- *And just as you don’t withdraw from your family or look for another family when conflicts arise – so also we don’t withdraw from our spiritual family or look for another spiritual family when feelings get hurt or conflicts arise*
- In fact – it is in the process of working through difficulties in spiritual family relationships that God often does His best work in revealing to us where we need to change to grow into spiritual maturity
- This is one of the most important life lessons you can teach your children that will help them grow up into spiritual maturity – namely – *to love their spiritual family – even in the midst of conflict or strained relationships*
- Sooner or later some other kid – or adult – from their spiritual family is going to hurt them or disappoint them or act unchristianly toward them
- Your child may be hurt or angry enough to want to withdraw from her spiritual family – *withdraw from her spiritual siblings* – or maybe go look for a different spiritual family where everyone would always be nice to her
- How will you handle that situation?
- *Will you use that situation as a learning opportunity to teach your children what it means to love their spiritual family // to accept siblings who are different // to practice patience, kindness and forgiveness // to learn how to resolve conflicts // to learn to be tolerant of kids who are poorly behaved or spiritually immature??*
- **The church does not exist only to offer opportunities for worship and Bible learning**
- *The church exists to provide opportunities for imperfect children of God to learn how to love other imperfect children of God in the midst of the ups and downs of real-life relationships*
- **Because that’s how God grows us into spiritual maturity – not just by learning Bible verses – but by putting biblical truth into practice in the context of real-life relationships**

- Parents: *Are you helping your children to learn how to thrive in a local church and to accept spiritual siblings with different personalities and backgrounds and varying degrees of spiritual commitment and maturity?*
- One of the best gifts with long-lasting benefits that parents can give their children is to model and teach a positive, loving attitude toward the church as their spiritual family – *not just the ideal church of your imagination – but the real church of real people with real flaws in which God has placed you*

III. DISCIPLESHIP: ABIDING IN CHRIST (John 15:4-9)

- A little girl and boy walked hand-in-hand to a neighbor's house
- The girl was barely able to reach the doorbell – and a lady, a family friend, answered the door
- The little girl said: *We're Mr. & Mrs. Jones, and we're playing house. May my husband and I come in?*
- The neighbor lady welcomed them inside and offered them some lemonade and a cookie, which they happily accepted
- But when a second glass of lemonade was offered, the little girl declined: *No thank you. We have to go home now. Mr. Jones just wet his pants.*"
- Little children love to play house.
- Question: *Who are their role models for learning to be a husband or wife or father or mother?*
- Who are your children patterning their lives after?
- John Stott: *In the simplest possible terms, God's eternal purpose for His people is that we should become like Jesus.*
- That is the goal of Christian parenting: *that our children would become like Jesus*
- *How do we get there?*

John 15:4 – 9 (The Message) “Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

⁵“I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. ⁶Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. ⁷But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. ⁸This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples. ⁹“I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love.

- *We get there by abiding in Christ // remaining in Christ // living in Christ // making our home in Christ and His love and His truth*
- Abiding in a love relationship with Jesus – allowing the life of Christ to flow through us – feeding on his words – expressing humble dependence in prayer – bearing fruit as the life and power and love of the risen Christ flow through us – *that is how we grow in Christ-likeness*
- **Essential and foundational to this process is for the Word of Christ to dwell in us richly**
- *Neither you nor your children will ever become like Jesus without His word abiding in you and His truth saturating your mind*
- You need to be teaching God's Word to your children at home – and you need to get your children involved in Sunday School, AWANA, No Limits and other Christian education ministries of the church
- *Take advantage of every opportunity to teach God's Word to your children when they are young and eager to learn so that their formative beliefs and values and worldview will be based on biblical truth*

But here is the danger: the assumption that if our children are learning Bible stories and concepts and truths – that they are therefore becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus

- *Knowledge of the truth is essential – but not sufficient – for discipleship*
- ***Knowledge of biblical truth must be accompanied by a heart for God and a growing love relationship with Jesus and a practical obedience to the truth***
- *The danger is in giving the impression that merely knowing biblical truths and following biblical rules is the essence of Christianity*
- And that is exactly the impression that many Christian youth have – ***following Christ is primarily a matter of believing the right things about Jesus and following the biblical rules of Christian behavior***
- But, of course, that is a distortion of Christianity and not the real thing
- ***The essence of Christianity is a life-giving love relationship with the living Person of Jesus Christ***
- Our children and youth need to hear that message clearly and repeatedly
- *Because many kids raised in the church begin to think the Christian life is all about following rules and reciting Bible verses and keeping up appearances and not doing what everyone else is doing*
- And the reality is: *very few teenagers will get turned on to a faith that consists primarily of doctrines and rules – things to believe and things NOT to do*
- They need to hear again and again: ***The Christian life is all about a love relationship with Jesus***
- What is it that makes the Christian life exciting and joyful and satisfying? *The rules? The Do's and Don'ts? The doctrines? The church meetings?*

- **What makes the Christian life exciting and joyful and satisfying is Jesus Himself !! His very life flowing through us – making us come fully alive!! -- His unconditional love meeting our deepest needs**
- **We become more like Jesus and experience an abundant and joyful and satisfying and liberating and fruitful life by abiding in Christ – by living in close connection with Him – by allowing his love to penetrate into our hearts and by allowing His powerful life to flow through us**

IV. MINISTRY: SERVING GOD BY SERVING OTHERS (John 13:13-17)

- Input can only take a person so far in their spiritual growth
- **Extending Christ’s love to others by serving their needs is an essential part of becoming a fully devoted follower of Jesus**
- ***The path to Christ-likeness is the path of servanthood – not the path of religious consumerism – not the path of “what’s in it for me?”***

John 13:13-17 ¹³**You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because it is true.** ¹⁴**And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet.** ¹⁵**I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.** ¹⁶**How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them.** ¹⁷**You know these things—now do them! That is the path of blessing.**

- What does it mean to become like Jesus Christ?
- *It means to consider others better than yourself // it means putting the interests of others ahead of your own // it means humbling yourself to serve others in love // it means being a giver rather than a taker in relationships // it means being a producer rather than a consumer in your spiritual family // it means putting the common good of your spiritual family ahead of your own interests and desires //*
- **Parents:** *Are you helping your children and youth to develop a Christ-like servant attitude rather than a worldly consumer mindset in relation to their spiritual family?*
- Are you teaching them that God has gifted them and Shaped them to play a role in building up our church to be all that God wants us to be?
- *Are you teaching them that God can use them to make a positive difference in the lives of their spiritual siblings and peers?*
- *Input can only take a person so far in their spiritual growth*
- **There comes a point at which output and service to others and loving one’s neighbor as oneself and using God-given gifts and abilities to help others are necessary for continued spiritual growth**

- Especially during the teenage and college and young adult years – *significant spiritual growth and spiritual passion and vitality can be developed only in the context of service to others*
- More and more input alone will not be sufficient to keep youth and college students engaged in the Christian life – *there must be a service component – -- there must be a sense that following Christ involves serving others and making a difference in the lives of others*
- **God places each of us in a spiritual family – not only to receive spiritual input --- but also to learn how to serve one another in love**

V. **EVANGELISM: SHARING THE GOOD NEWS (Matthew 4:19; Acts 1:8)**

- J. Campbell White: *“Most people are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives. Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ’s purpose toward the world he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of His eternal plans. The men and women who are putting everything into Christ’s mission are getting out of life the sweetest and most priceless rewards.”*
- What was the driving passion of Christ’s life?
- ***I have come to seek and to save what was lost***
- **The essence of spiritual growth as Christ-followers is to allow the Life of Christ to flow through us (John 15)**
- *The driving passion of the Life of Christ has not changed – it is still the passion to seek and to save the lost*
- ***Therefore, growing in Christ-likeness cannot be divorced from engaging in evangelism – joining Christ in his work of seeking and saving the lost***
- From the beginning, Jesus said:

Matthew 4:19 (NIV) ¹⁹“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”

- ***To follow the One who came to seek and to save the lost is to embark on the journey and adventure of becoming fishers of men – of sharing the Good News of the Gospel with others***
- **And children make some of the best fishers of men**
- The truth is – the most natural thing in the world for children who love Jesus is telling others about Jesus
- *Children are generally less inhibited in witnessing than teens or adults are*

- I know our girls were often far bolder in inviting their friends to church than I would have been in inviting their parents to church
- *We rarely went to Adventure Club or VBS without a full carload of their friends – and that was due to their own initiative and desire to invite them*
- The best time to begin evangelism training is when children are young
- That is also the most strategic time in terms of winning people to Christ
- *A majority of people who become Christians come to faith in Jesus Christ as children or teens*
- **The most opportune and strategic time to reach people with the Gospel is when they are young – and the best-equipped people to befriend them and reach out to them and invite them to church and to tell them about Jesus are other children who love Jesus**
- **The best time to reach people with the Gospel is when they are children – and the best people to reach out to them are children who love Jesus**
- *We want to impart to our children something of Christ's heart for the lost – something of Christ's passion for seeking and saving the lost*
- We want to teach children how to love their neighbors and peers without imitating their sins
- *We want to encourage children to bring their friends to AWANA and to church*
- **A golden opportunity is coming up in just 3 weeks with VBS – a great opportunity to encourage our children to reach out to other children and invite them to come and learn about Jesus at our Vacation Bible School**
- Of course, there are risks in encouraging our children to interact with non-Christian children – the influence can go either way and sometimes it goes the wrong way
- *But I would like to suggest there are also major risks in discouraging evangelism and outreach until adulthood*
- The primary danger is this: *teenage boredom with the Christian life*
- Most teenagers and college students and young adults are looking for some sense of adventure // some sense of significance // some sense of making a difference // some sense of carving out their own unique identity and purpose in life
- Almost without exception – if you find a teenager or college student who is on fire in their relationship with Jesus Christ – you will find someone who is on mission with Christ in the world
- *Their spiritual passion is not being fueled merely by more entertaining input – their spiritual passion is being fueled by engaging fully in Christ's mission in the world* – love-your-neighbor service projects // ministry to the poor // evangelistic outreach // mission trips – and often – *the more demanding and the more dangerous and the more extreme – the better*

- **You – and your children – were made for a mission – to serve Jesus Christ as His witnesses in the world**
- *Authentic Christianity is deeply and thoroughly missional in character*
- *Our kids will not experience authentic Christianity by becoming religious consumers – our kids will experience authentic Christianity by joining with other fully devoted followers of Jesus in participating in Christ’s mission in the world*
- Jesus’ first words to his disciples were: *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*
- Jesus’ last words to his disciples were: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations // You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you – and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*
- **That is a cause worth living for // That is a cause worth denying self for // That is a cause worth choosing Christ over the world for // That is a cause worth becoming passionate about**
- *That is a cause that will make us come fully alive and will wholly satisfy the life of Christ within us // That is a cause that will demand from us everything we have and give back to us life’s sweetest and most priceless rewards*

(Conclusion):

- John Crysostom: *If you wish to leave much wealth to your children, leave them in God’s care.*
- *Introduce them to the riches of knowing Jesus Christ and the fullness of His Spirit. Do no worry about leaving your children money or material things – but rather seek to develop within them virtue and character. Give them a confidence in the spiritual riches available to them in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Give them the wisdom to discern right from wrong.*
- *Those who know the abundant riches of being cared for as God’s child will not lack for anything.*

Salvation Prayer: Dear God, my heart has been restless and empty apart from You. I want to live a life of significance and purpose – a life that fulfills Your purposes for me. I want to know You personally through a relationship with Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus Christ shed his blood on the Cross to forgive my sins and reconcile me to You. I believe that he arose from the dead to give eternal life to all who believe in him. I do now receive Jesus Christ into my life as my Savior and Lord. I will stop living for myself and start living for Christ and His purposes. May the life and love and power of Jesus Christ flow through me to enable me to become what You created me to be. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

“As For Me and My House”