

Family Dynamics

“Building a Dynamic Functional Family”

I. SCRIPTURE

Psalm 127:1a – “Except YAHUAH [God] build the house, they labor in vain that build it.”

II. INTRODUCTION

As we look at the front of today’s bulletin, we see a picture of what appears to be a happy, multicultural family. This is a photo of 15 persons, with what appears to be a white man and woman at the bottom who I would guess are the parents. And there appears to be a mix of beautiful black and white children, a beautiful Hispanic daughter or daughter-in-law, and a grandchild or maybe even grandchildren.

The scripture below this photograph reads “like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them”. It is taken from Psalm 127, verses 4 and 5. Yet, today’s scripture, although taken from Psalm 127, is from verse 1. It reads “except YAHUAH [God] build the house, they labor in vain that build it”.

The title of today’s message is “Family Dynamics”; the subtitle is “Building a Dynamic Functional Family”. Do you know what “Family Dynamics” means?

III. FAMILY DYNAMICS

Once, some years ago, when Hydie and I and our girls were visiting San Francisco, we were invited into the home of a close Asian acquaintance of ours. I’ll never forget what my Asian friend said to me before he introduced us to his rather large – immediate and extended – family. He said, “Rich, I want to introduce you to my family so that you will learn more about our family dynamic... about how we interact with each other as family”.

A. DEFINITION

Family Dynamics – the patterns of relating, or interactions, between family members.

According to Psychology Today, having close family relationships can afford a person within a higher well-being and lower rates of depression and disease throughout his or her lifetime. But... in many families, getting along isn't a given. The interaction between various members is at the core of these complicated dynamics. In many of our families, we often have stereotypical sources of disharmony – that obnoxious uncle, that middle child or the one more loved, or the ne'er do-well son-in-law, or whomever – that we joke about. And yet, there are factors – such as the family environment or sibling rivalries that do emerge, that determine the viability and stability of our family networks.

B. A FUNCTIONAL FAMILY

Peace and harmony may be the goal, but family dysfunction is tricky and can come in many forms. When one family member has to contend with a problem such as alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, neglect, or depression, then the entire household is impacted. Slight and misbehaviors need to be readily addressed by the family to avoid disharmony in the longer term.

In a functional family, parents within strive to create an environment in which everyone feels safe, heard, loved, and respected. This requires parents to set and uphold rules, but yet not to resort to overly rigid regulation (remember do not provoke your children to anger?). This sounds easy, but it can be really hard to achieve. For example, family quarrels and grudges can have lasting effects, sometimes following members into old age. Some reasons for such conflict are that parents do not enforce rules that guide healthy behavior... home isn't a safe place for its members... there is not sense of unity... there is no healthy communication.

C. UNDERSTANDING ELOHIYM [God]'s FAMILY DYNAMICS DESIGN

As our creator, ELOHIYM [God] designed a world filled with dynamic relationship *systems*. We see them in creation, in the work place, in organizations, and in groups to which we belong such as this congregation.

A *system* is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole.” So, in truth, a relationship system can be a set of individual and unique parts working together or connected as whole.

Paul reminds us that our body, our church is a type of dynamic relationship system when he says that “for as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is MASHIACH [Christ]” (1 Corinthians 12:12). Each member is distinct in his or her gifting and talents and all work together for the glorification of YAHUAH [God]. Paul uses the human body as a metaphor in which to convey the truth that individual body parts impact the entire body... and alternatively, the body impacts the individual parts. We are reminded throughout Scripture of this truth – when one member weeps, all members weep (Romans 12:15)... and to love our brother, our neighbor is to love our ADONAI [Lord] and follow His commands (John 13:13-15; 1 John 4:7-8).

One smaller dynamic relationship system YAHUAH [God] has designed is the family – an individual system that is designed to carry out the teaching and modeling of His Word in daily life: that this is for the growth and nurturing of the family members and for the glorification of YAHUAH [God].

The family structure is associated with the establishment of rules for family interactions as well as roles and responsibilities of each family member. Some of these rules, roles, and responsibilities are clearly stated... whereas others are not clearly stated. Your family of origin often provides a “blueprint” for how you communicate... how you engage in relationships... how you set priorities... and more. It can influence you even after you leave home. YAHUAH [God] Himself reminded His people that their choices would have an impact on future generations, when He said...

“YAHUAH [the LORD] is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.” (Numbers 14:18). Thus, behavior is often formed by and is inseparable from the functioning of one’s family of origin.

IV. A LESSON IN FAMILY DYNAMICS

Let’s consider King David, of whom YAHUAH [God] said, “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfil all my will” (Acts 13:22). Yes, he did indeed become a man after YAHUAH [God]’s own heart after his repentance, but during his guilt period... his mending period, his family was very dysfunctional.

The story of David and Bathsheba is well known. David sees Bathsheba bathing on the roof, brings her to his palace, and sleeps with her. Bathsheba becomes pregnant, and in an attempt to cover up his sin, David secretly orders Uriah to the most dangerous part of the battle, where he is killed, thus leading to yet another sin. These incidents happened when Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom were teenagers. For sure, these children saw their father model behavior that was manipulative and treacherous. The children learned from their father David to hide or keep secrets, avoid issues, and learned how to ignore the hurt that grew out of one's own actions. And just in this basic introduction of David, you and I can gather that *his family* appeared to have a disconnected and chaotic system.

One of the tragedies of David's family is that it appears that David would *ignore* rather than *face* and *deal with* the incest between Amnon and Tamar. (This is *chaotic*, due to David's lack of family leadership). Then, two (2) years later, Absalom chooses to take things into his own hands (again, this is *chaotic*, due again to David's lack of leadership within his family). (David would move into a place of authority and "discipline" Amnon in an unbiblical manner.)

After the sheering of sheep was complete, Absalom invited his family and Amnon over to his house for a party. After Amnon had heavily drunk, Absalom murdered his brother Amnon to avenge Tamar (this is again *chaotic*; an excessive expression of emotions and *disconnected*, with a low level of loyalty toward family... and is *disconnected* from emotional pain each member was experiencing). Absalom seemed to take pride in the murder, feeling justice had been served. Absalom eventually flees to avoid the consequences of the murder (again, this is *chaotic* and *disconnected*). Absalom was in exile from his family for three years (again, *disconnected*).

Pause for a moment and consider who in David's family is often considered the "bad guy." Likely it is Absalom. The reality is, however, that David's whole family needed to deal with a number of issues. And we should not fail to consider that most of the dysfunction of David's family started with David himself... his sinful actions. While in his guilt, while he "kept silent" ... while his "bones grew old" ... while he was "groaning all the day long" ... while YAHUAH [God]'s "hand was heavy upon [him]", and while his "vitality was turned into the drought of summer..." a perfect storm of dysfunction was building within (both) his immediate and extended family. Each of David's family members had hurts and wounds; each family member needed help. And yet, for some reason it appears that David himself was *unable* to take the appropriate steps to deal with the dysfunction. Amnon should have been dealt

appropriately dealt with... the emotional damage that was done to Tamar should have been addressed... for the pain of Amnon's violation likely devastated Tamar's whole life, wouldn't you think? We need to consider the various biblical principles and processes within a family's dynamics... we need to consider the role of each family member within... so that we can illustrate a correct Gospel of Truth and illustrate YAHUAH [God]'s Grace within the family... and without. So, we need to apply biblical concepts to each family process. YAHUSHA [Jesus] modeled balanced behavior and expression in His interaction with the Body. YAHUSHA [Jesus] was full of both Grace and Truth, for He "became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of Grace and Truth" (John 1:14).

YAHUSHA [Jesus] also modeled flexibility. While he set an example for us, and taught us about how we should behave... He maintained a laser focus on the work that His Father had for Him. At times His work including moving to a different village (Luke 4:43-44) ... while on other occasions, it meant being present with children (Matthew 19:13-15) ... interacting with outcasts (Luke 5:29-31) ... and working closely with His own family of disciples (John 13).

V. BUILDING A DYNAMIC FUNCTIONAL FAMILY: AT HOME & IN THE CHURCH

Now, I ask that you reflect on your own family experiences. It is helpful to remember the limits and freedoms that were operating there... and maybe are even still part of your family dynamics. As you reflect on these limits and freedoms, you can see how they have greatly shaped you (inside and out) and have influenced the roles of each individual within your family (whether your immediate or extended family). This reflection process is *not* about blaming your parents... blaming your children... or someone else. It is likely that your parents did the best they knew how... that your children or grandchildren are a product of their environment... maybe they are even a product to some extent of the environment that you have created for them.

Next, I ask that you reflect on your "family" experience here within this body... within YAHUAH [God]'s Church. For this Body, this Church is no less than the Body, the Church of YAHUSHA HA'MASHIACH [Jesus Christ] Himself. For what you are seeing here today... what you are experiencing here today... are most likely, in part at least, of how *you* have impacted it by your individual interaction... or lack of interaction with it. Consider...

How have you contributed to this body...? Are you judging the other body members here through your own eyes... are you interacting with others, looking at others here

today based in part on your own life experience... your own history of dysfunction? As did David, are you impacting YAHUAH [God]'s church, "keeping silent" because your "vitality has turned into the drought of summer..." due to your own sins – past or present – and the guilt that still remains within you? Or instead... when one member here today weeps, are you weeping for them too (Romans 12:15)? Are you loving your brother, your sister, your parent/grandparent? Your son, daughter, grandchild...? Are you loving your neighbor as our ADONAI [Lord] has loved them... are you following His commands, His guidelines on how you are supposed to act within His body?

Remember the smallest dynamic relationship system that YAHUAH [God] has designed for us is *the family*: the system that is designed to carry out the teaching and modeling of His Word in daily life... for the growth and nurturing of its members and the glorification of YAHUAH [God]... by building this dynamic within our homes first, but then bringing this dynamic with you to YAHUSHA [Jesus] body here on earth, and ultimately to YAHUAH [God]'s Kingdom above.

It is my hope today, that as you develop a more mature understanding of the influence that your family of origin has had on you as a child... and perhaps you gain a better understanding of certain behaviors that you are engaging in today as a result... that you will gain a deeper understanding and make better sense of your experiences... so that it will leading you into a deeper appreciation for whom YAHUAH [God] created you to be ... so that you will be able to begin sharing your hurts with Him... so that He will begin to bring you a continual healing and transformation process in your life... as you need and desire.

And through this process, my hope is that your healing and transformation, and the healing and transformation within your family... will eventually, but quickly begin to bring healing and transformation within our church family here today. Today I pray that you will commit yourself to this process. Will you? Now? For unless you allow YAHUAH [God] builds your house at home... or here... your own labor in building it up is in vain.

References & Credits:

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