

Daily Readings

Please note: This week we look at traditions. The development of traditions helps us to see the big picture of what is important for our families. These passages are recommended for your daily reading. Each of these passages are also meant to be shared with someone in your life – spouse, children, family, friend or parent.

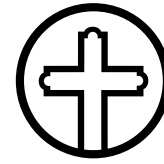
Monday, September 15 – *Matthew 5:1-12 “The Beatitudes.”* If the Sermon on the Mount is at the heart of Jesus’ teaching, then the Beatitudes are at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. Read this passage at the beginning of the day. Share it with spouse, family or friend. Identify the Beatitude that best describes each person with whom you share. Affirm each other as a blessing.

Tuesday, September 16 – *Galatians 22 “And the fruits of the spirit are...”* Paul believes that as we grow in the spirit of Christ, we will grow in bearing these nine fruits. Read this passage at the beginning of the day. Again read it with those you love. Answer these two questions: What fruit do you best exhibited? With what fruit do you struggle?

Wednesday, September 17 – *Exodus 20:1-17 The Ten Commandments.* Read this passage aloud as Moses did to the Hebrews. Notice the first four are about our relationship with God and the last six are concerning our relationship with each other. Again, like yesterday, which are your best and worst?

Thursday, September 18 – *Romans 5:1-11.* Paul reminds us of the eternal forgiveness that comes from Jesus’ death on the cross. *“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* In your prayers today, remember to thank God for the gift of salvation. Read this together as a family. Tell those around you how much God loves them.

Friday, September 19 – *1 Corinthians 13.* Paul speaks of the gift of love in this chapter. He lists several qualities of love. Read this passage together. Highlight the qualities of love. Discuss how your family exhibits these qualities. Remember... no family is perfect. Focus on the positives first.



TRIETSCH

September 14, 2008
Study Guide & Daily Readings

Family Ties — *Discovering a God-Led Family Life (week 5)* **“The Big Picture”**

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

As hurricane Ike hits the Gulf Coast, we are reminded again of the perils of living near water. The Gulf Coast brings its own dangers with hurricanes and tropical storms. Other bodies of water like lakes and rivers also present the danger of flooding.

Jesus closes the Sermon on the Mount with this analogy recorded in Matthew 7. Jesus says that following His words is like building your house on rock. The solid foundation of the rock keeps the house safe when the winds and flood waters of life come. Similarly, building your house on sand is precarious. This shifting foundation will not stand up to the perils of life’s greatest challenges.

Analogy explained – This analogy of Jesus is not just about the differences between rock and sand. Why would anyone want to build a house on sand when they could build on rock? In the arid, dry, semi-desert of Galilee, water was a valuable resource. Every village existed because of the availability of water. In most regions, water was found in the streams and rivers that would run through sandy based canyons. When the spring rains came, the canyon would flood and wash out the base of the canyon. During the other months of the year, the river would run very shallow, restoring the sediments. There was a constant geological give and take. Any structure built in these canyons would only last until the spring rainy season.

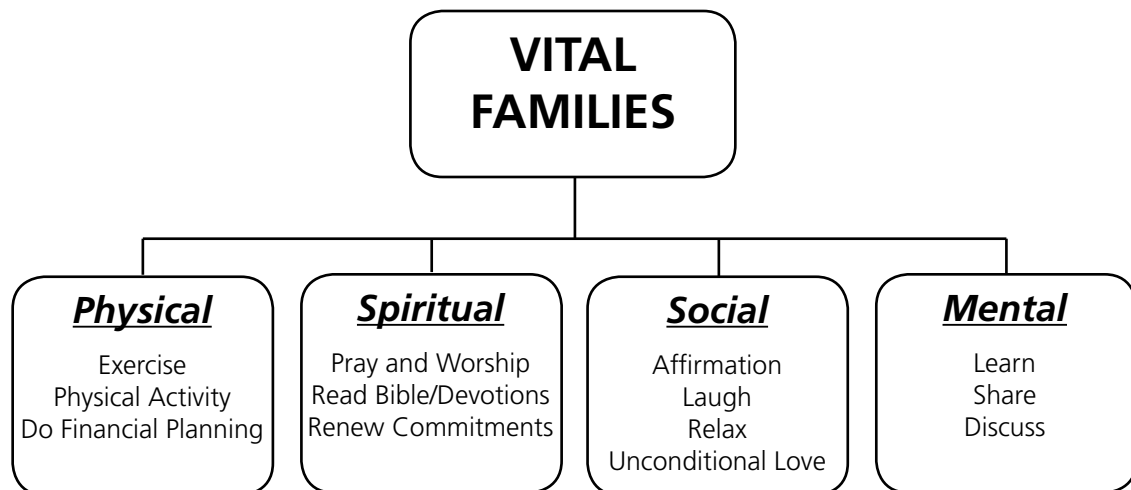
Houses and villages were built on the high rocky formations. Water was hauled by hand up from the river. It was a hard and time-consuming task that had to be done daily. The only alternative was to build your house down in the valley on the sand. Everyone knew this was foolish and doomed to disaster. As difficult as it was to build your house on the rock, this was the only way to live successfully in every season.

A Message for Our Day

Jesus is not trying to make our lives more difficult. The Sermon on the Mount is the core message of Jesus' teachings. These passages are offered here as instruction to make our lives together fuller and more complete. But these lessons do not come without discipline. In the analogy of the house built on the rock, Jesus is reminding us that life comes with storms and challenges. Following Christ is not easy, but there is no doubt it is the best.

A Family with Traditions

Stephen Covey in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, uses the following diagram to illustrate the use of traditions to create consistency in our families. Each of these assumes the family practices them together.



As you can see from the diagram, building traditions is more than just going on vacations and building memories. It is more than just celebrating holidays together. Building traditions that really make a difference means intentionally including all of these vital human aspects. Often we can include at least two of the four in one regular activity. Not every tradition will include all four of these components, but in each family the practice of traditions that include all of these over the course of time is vital to the family.

The Spiritual

At the core of all of these is the spiritual. When we include the spiritual in our building of habits and traditions, we often find that the social, mental and physical fall into place. When we include the spiritual, we invite God into our families, marriages and children's lives. We form a partnership with God that reaches beyond our human grasp. In effect, we build our house upon the rock.

Discussion Questions

Please note: These questions are intended to be used in any way that is helpful for you. You may use them as a means of personal reflection. Or you may want to use them as a family to further discuss the issues of recognizing and creating family traditions..

- List the traditions in your life or family. Traditions are those events and celebrations that take priority over all other activities. Birthday, anniversary, family dinner, family vacations, holiday gatherings, weekly worship attendance, daily prayers around meals and bed time would all be included in a list. You probably will add others. Discuss which are most important. Which are least important? Which of the four areas have you left out? Have you put the spiritual at the center?
- List the traditions you have seen in other families. Discuss how these families effectively nurture these traditions and keep them going.
- Discuss how having fun together, learning together, worshipping together, working together, and serving together meet the basic needs to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy and to laugh?
- On a scale of one to ten (1 being lowest and ten being highest) attach a value to the regular daily and weekly activities – school, work, family time, extra-school activities, worship and church activities. Now measure the time you spend doing each of these. Do you need more balance?