

Series: Fighting For Your Family
Message Title: ***Faith Builds a Family***
Date: Sunday, November 4, 2018
Scripture: Various Scriptures
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Introduction

All families fight!

The month of November is the beginning of an intense holiday season, and holidays can bring out the worst in us and in our families!

Much of this comes from heightened expectations, unresolved conflicts, and raw emotions.

When we speak of family, what do we mean?
Family = "the basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children; descendants of with common ancestry; a group of individuals living under one roof and usually under one head."

—Miriam-Webster Dictionary

"A group of people, usually of the same blood (but do not have to be), who genuinely love, trust, care about, and look out for each

other. Not to be mistaken with relatives sharing the same household who hate each other.” —Urban Dictionary

“A family is a place where you are loved the most and act the worst!”

It’s strange, but true. Our families are often the places of our greatest fulfillment and our deepest frustrations. Family can flood our hearts with love and sink our hearts with fear. With this same group of people, we share heights of joy and depths of pain, and we all find ourselves struggling in and with family life.

Yet while many are fighting with their family, there has never been a greater need for us to fight FOR our families.

Today I am beginning a brief three-week series of messages aimed at one of the most vital, yet vulnerable areas of life—our homes and our families.

I believe the condition of our hearts and homes is essential to our lives and the lives of those around us. Most of our social, moral

and ethical issues go back to issues in our homes and families.

“The life of religion, and the welfare and glory of both the Church and the State, depend much on family government and duty. If we suffer the neglect of this, we shall undo all.” —Richard Baxter

Yet at the outset, I want to dispel the idea that I am only speaking to one group of people—those here as a family unit. I’m speaking to all of us.

Some may feel the discussion of family is in the past. Maybe you are grown, separated, divorced, or have faced death and loss.

Others may feel family is a present reality for you, and you are hoping I will offer something to help you oxygenate your soul. You are in it, at it, on it, and trying to get through it.

And then, family may be something future for you. You are looking, praying and thinking about what will be. But all of us are part of families, and each of us need a family.

So you may be without a partner, you may not be a parent, you may be in pain over your family situation, but we are all products of families and the positive or negative influences of our families.

I am speaking to people who are building and battling for their families AND I am speaking to people who are broken because of brokenness in their families.

Good or bad, you have a human family, and thankfully, you are part of God's family, the church. I pray this church will be a family of families to help, support, encourage, defend, and strengthen you. These messages and principles will have importance and application for all of us.

Starting today, I want us to investigate three virtues highlighted and repeated in Scripture that are at the heart of the gospel and vital in all human relationships.

"So now **faith**, **hope**, and **love** abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love"
(1 Corinthians 13:13 ESV).

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of **faith** and labor of **love** and steadfastness of **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 ESV).

Here we have the three pillars, the three defenses of a strong and stable family life. And since the image of a breastplate and helmet is used, there is a view of safeguarding and securing life through faith, hope and love.

We fight for our families by faith!



1. Faith is vital because a battle is raging.

Background: Nehemiah is in Persia and serving as Cupbearer to King, but Nehemiah receives a report of the condition of his homeland, Israel.

“And they said to me, ‘The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of

Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire'" (Nehemiah 1:3 ESV).

The walls of Jerusalem are broken. This is also true when we think of the family in our nation today—great destruction, brokenness and distortion.

In Nehemiah's day, the broken walls of Jerusalem were emblematic of the broken witness of God's people. The people God had called, gathered, and ordained to be a blessing to the world—the Jews—were now in shame and dispersion. They needed strength and renewal, and they needed to engage in a battle to fight for their faith and their families.

"And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, 'Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes'" (Nehemiah 4:14 ESV).

This was a call to battle. Why? They were under attack. Read Nehemiah 4:1.

We face this challenge today. The family, by God's design, and our individual families are under attack and assault in our world. May I add, this is a far greater issue that is changing cultural context and constructs. The fact is, the foundation and fabric of families are caught in a great battle—a spiritual battle for the lives and souls of people.

Because the home and family were designed to bear the image of the goodness of God in this world, you can be sure there are continual attacks on the home in the world by the forces of darkness. We are in a war! It's not a cultural war; it is spiritual warfare for the value and endurance of the family created by God's desire and design.

After the Apostle Paul provides instructions for home and family life in Ephesians 5-6, we read, "Finally brothers be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand the schemes of the devil" (Ephesians 6:10-11).

Satan plays for keeps, and every family faces challenges, losses, injuries, and setbacks that

will dishearten us and cause us to want to throw in the towel. There is a tendency to just exist in the rubble like Nehemiah's day rather than fight to rebuild and restore the glory of God in our families.

Bad things happen in all families in this world and hard things happen to good families and faithful believers—spouses cheat, children rebel, people disappoint, disease disrupts, death surprises, family secrets become family scandals.

We deal with all kinds of real and painful brokenness including alcohol and drug addiction, abuse, sexual exploitation, homosexuality, pornography, and yes, even suicide.

Yet in and through these things, it is faith that enables us to endure and advance when the dream of a different family life is eclipsed by the one we have and live.

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith”
(1 John 5:4 ESV).

Faith is vital because a battle is raging.

2. Faith provides secure footing for a good fight.

Hiking, climbing and building are all dependent upon footing. Where do you stand and how do you step regarding your view of family?

Given all the overwhelming obstacles and obstructions related to family in our society, how can we know the way and be sure of our path? By faith!

When I talk about faith, I am not talking about something emotional or mystical, but something substantial.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1 ESV).

This is a plan and blueprint revealed in Holy Scripture. Family life begins with faith in God’s plan and purpose.

Lets do a brisk walk through Scripture and examine this together.

God is the Originator, Author and Designer of the family (human and church).

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’... then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Genesis 1:27-18; 2:7 ESV).

You have been created by God and planned for a purpose. Because of the origin of humanity and family, you can’t just build a family free-form!

Genesis 2 is the story of the origins of family life. Family is not some vestige of former social order or aging evolution.

A child went to his mother and asked where he came from. The mother spoke of God's creation and the marvel of procreation. The father told of the progress of evolution. The child was confused and went back to his mother, "Oh, I was talking about my side of the family."

The design and development of the family has a spiritual origin.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:24-25 ESV).

Man was created specifically, spiritually, socially, and sexually.

"The most important revolution of the twentieth century has been the sexual revolution... Contraception replaced conception. Pleasure was separated from responsibility. It was as if a license was given out, legitimizing the bending of every part of our lives around serving ourselves. Since that time, divorce, remarriage, abortion,

premarital sex, and extramarital sex, as well as homosexuality have been accepted by increasing percentages of the public. Pornography is huge business. This is not just a problem with society out there. Many churches have found their members plagued by failed marriages and illicit affairs, by so-called private sins that turn into public disgraces, some of which are known, some of which are not yet known.”

—Mark Dever

Therefore when it comes to the family as designed and described in Scripture, there is a need for all of us—married and unmarried—to honor and defend the family.

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous” (Hebrews 13:4 ESV).

Our identity, dignity, sexuality, and family are all shaped and secured within God’s plan set forth in Scripture.

Marriage and family represent the foundation of human social order, and when

weakened and devalued, it undermines the superstructure of every culture.

Despite all the revised narratives and skeptical rhetoric, marriage and family life have been the bedrock of culture in the Fertile Crescent to Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America, and Australia for more than 6000 years!

Healthy and enduring family relationships do not just happen because some people have better chemistry and circumstances than others. They are not just more compatible! The truth is, we are all hopelessly incompatible.

Everyone, regardless of their family, has or will experience disappointment, and we will disappoint others. None of us is immune and there are no families here that are as good as their best portraits! Why? Because much of the battle is in us.

Genesis 3 tells us there is something wrong in us—sin.

Sin = The determination to do what we do for our good, to benefit our expectations, to fulfill our dreams and to meet our needs. Sin is my care for myself more than concern for God or the good of others.

Therefore everyone in this room has or will experience disappointment and will disappoint others—even those we love the most.

Because of failures within the families, we all need forgiveness and freedom that comes not from family life, but from life in Christ. Jesus alone confronts our stubbornness and our sin, and leads us to surrender, service and bless those around us.

Christ is the Solid Rock upon which we can stand—secure footing through overwhelming storms.

3. Faith sustains us through struggles and gives strength to stay in the fight.

“So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. But when

Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night” (Nehemiah 4:6-9 ESV).

The challenge came when they were half way through. In the midst of a demanding, challenging and overwhelming effort, there was attack, criticism and challenge.

Sanballat and a group of angry people sought to discredit, discourage and destroy those who had hope in God and His plan for them as a people. They criticized, taunted, and intimidated them. Yet Nehemiah challenged the people to engage the battle and to overcome by faith.

Begin reading at Nehemiah 4:15. The people each took a place on the wall nearest their home. They held a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. They were building and battling.

We must do the same today—build, battle and believe the promises and purposes of God.

“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proven, and to be steady on all the battle fronts besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.”

—Martin Luther

No doubt fallenness and brokenness abound; fear and resistance surround, but you are not your genealogy or your family history; you are not a victim of circumstances or experiences.

If you are in Christ, you are a new creation and faith moves you to seek the shelter of God and to find your strength in God, even through the darkest and harshest storms of family life.

Good news! Everything that would destabilize and defeat you is overcome by faith.

Read Nehemiah 4:15-17

“And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, ‘The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us’” (Nehemiah 4:18-20 ESV).

God has fought for us. God stepped into the drama of human darkness and sinfulness, and there, Jesus overcame sin with all of its consequences and provided salvation with all of its benefits by grace.

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5 ESV).

Here the gospel becomes our confidence and our comfort. The worst that could

happen in life happened to Jesus so that in the worst moments of our lives and families, we can look to Him.

Faith is dependence and confidence. You reflect faith when you flip on a light switch, when you step on your brakes, and when you take God at His word regarding your life and family. Faith builds the family, and if you are to fight, you will only overcome by faith.

“Everything in life we commit to God is really safe and everything in life we refuse to commit to Him is never safe.” —A.W. Tozer

Faith is commitment to God and His Word of truth.