

McCabe United Methodist Church

September 8 & 9, 2012

by Pastor Rick Fossum

Family Link (Part 1): Family Sharing

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 * Ephesians 6:1-4

Did you hear about Karen Donovan's new business? Karen is from Petaluma, California. She created a company called *Rent-A-Wife*. *Rent-A-Wife* was created to help people to decorate their homes, balance their checkbooks, run errands, make meals, do the dishes. Her new company is doing pretty good. In fact, she's already considering expanding her business and adding something she wants to call *Rent-A-Family*. Karen said, **"We can do what any family does. We can come over and eat all the food, turn on all the lights, put hand prints on the walls, take showers and leave the towels on the floor. When my clients are finished with *Rent-A-Family*,"** she said, **"they'll need my *Rent-A-Wife* to clean up. It makes perfect business sense!"**

Only in America! Are you concerned about our families today? According to Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, a Harvard Medical School pediatrician and columnist for *Family Circle Magazine*, **"We are the least family-oriented society in the civilized world."** He based his judgment on certain family qualities or lack of them such as the lack of communicating and listening skills, the lack of family affirmations, the lack of respect and trust in today's family, the lack of important rituals and traditions, and the lack of sharing religious beliefs. **"We're not doing very well,"** according to Dr. Brazelton.

Whether you agree with him or not, I want us to think about the family today. How is your family doing? Can it be better? Stronger? Healthier?

A few years ago, in Boulder, Colorado, Thomas Hansen, sued his parents for \$350,000 on grounds of **"parental malpractice."** Mom and Dad had messed up his upbringing so badly, he charged in his lawsuit, that he would need years of costly psychiatric treatment. I'm not sure if he won the lawsuit or not, but it should make us think, right?

Families! Is there anything more important, next to our faith in God, than the family? Winston Churchill said, **"There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virtues of human society, are created, strengthened and maintained."**

The family is the link to our past and it's the bridge to our future. The family is the conduit through which our morals and values, our ethics and faith get passed down from one generation to the next.

Our failure to make the family our top priority is the weak link in God's overall plan to build a better kingdom.

This fall and beyond, we'll be trying something new at McCabe and it's about the family. It's about strengthening the family. It's about helping us to focus on the family by redirecting our time and attention, our priorities and our faith. We are calling this new ministry or program *The Family Link*. It's a program for you and your family and for me and mine.

Today, Pastor Ray and I are beginning a series of messages that we are hoping will change your life and the life of your family. It's a lofty goal. We're hoping to both encourage people and challenge people to make the family their highest priority.

By the way, our definition of family includes traditional families, blended families, widows and single folks. Wherever you lay your head at night, is your family. A family can be one person or ten. A family can be young or old. Again, wherever you lay your head at night, is your family.

The challenge is this: We are asking each family to set aside fifteen minutes every day as *family time*. We are challenging families to turn off the TV, to shut down the computer, to put away the cell phones and invest fifteen minutes a day with your family using this simple formula:

1. *Socialize or a time of sharing.* Ask each other about the 'highs' and 'lows' of the day. Don't settle for 'huh' or 'everything is fine'. Share.
2. *Read* a verse or a passage of Scripture. These verses or passages will be posted in our weekly worship bulletins, in our monthly newsletters and on our website. We decided to begin by using the scripture from the *Upper Room Devotional*.
3. *Talk* about the Bible verse or passage and discuss how it relates to your life. What does it mean? How does it apply to you and your family?
4. *Pray* for each other, your family, your community, your church, your world. If you don't know how pray or if you're not in the habit . . . learn.
5. *Bless* each another.

We believe that by making *family time* a priority every night in every home, we will be helping to build a better tomorrow. We believe building stronger families is good for the church, the community and you.

Sarah came from a family where there was little love. They didn't have much time to give each other. Criticism, fighting, ridicule and disrespect were common in Sarah's family. Sarah never heard the words, "**I love you**" or "**I am sorry**."

Then, Sarah and her family found a church that encouraged spending *family time* together. It was one of those '*God things*' that we hear about. They started talking to each other and listening. Their faith grew.

Life around Sarah's home started to be different. Without warning, someone would stop in the middle of an argument to say they were sorry for raising their voice or being mean. Sarah began to hear herself saying, "I love you, Mom. I love you, Dad." And she heard the words, "I love you, Sarah" in return.

They began giving hugs to each other. They exchanged hurting each other for helping each other, name-calling for compliments, insults for forgiveness. It took a while, but eventually Sarah and her family changed.

I don't know what your family is like, but I do know that making time for each other and putting God in the center of the family will make a difference.

According to a study of more than 500 family counselors, successful and happy families have in common certain qualities such as:

1. Successful and happy families communicate and listen to each other
2. They affirm each other and support each other
3. They respect each other
4. They trust each other
5. They teach each other right from wrong
6. They have important rituals and traditions
7. And they share their faith

We can't buy these qualities. Walmart doesn't stock them. These qualities are earned by spending time together as a family.

Today, we're asking you to begin a new ritual or tradition in your home. We're asking you to participate in *The Family Link*. It will take about fifteen minutes a day. You can choose when you want your *family link* to meet whether in the morning or evening or whenever.

If you're a widow or single, we intend to compile a list of others who are single or widowed and encourage you to use the phone or the internet to develop your *Family Link* with them. Or, you can invite a friend or neighbor, a sister or son or daughter to be your *Family Link*.

Years ago, two boats left Memphis about the same time. They were both traveling down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. As they traveled side by side, sailors from one boat made a few snide remarks about the slow pace of the other boat. They exchanged insults. They challenged each other to a race. The prize was \$100 per sailor if their boat reached New Orleans first.

The race began. One of the boats fell behind. Plus, they were running out of

coal. They had plenty of coal for a normal trip, but not enough for a race. As the slower boat dropped further back, a young sailor took some of the ship's cargo and tossed it into the furnace. When the sailors saw that the cargo burned as well as the coal, they fueled their boat with the cargo they had been hired to transport. They ended up winning the race, but it came at the cost of all their cargo.

GOD has trusted us with the family. It's our cargo. It's our job to help make sure this cargo reaches its destination. We need to be careful. When the busyness of our lives takes priority over our families, our families suffer. When our own self-interests and our own wants and desires take priority over our families, our families suffer.

Through *the Family Link*, we hope that you will make your family your highest priority. I know how busy you are and how many irons you have in your fires, but is there anything more important than your family?

Begin by taking a few minutes and sharing with each other. It's not enough to simply respond by saying "I'm fine." Talk about your day. What went right and what did not? Whom did you meet? For some of you (us), talking about your day won't come easy, but it's important. Do that for about five minutes and then read the assigned Scripture for the day. Again, you'll find the daily Scripture readings in the bulletin each week or in our monthly *Messenger* or on our website. Eventually, Pastor Ray and I are hoping to use Scripture readings that will tie into our weekly messages.

The important part is to begin. I know this won't be easy for many of you, but I can't think of anything more important.

Rudyard Kipling once wrote about families, "**A family shares things like dreams, hopes, possessions, memories, smiles, frowns, and gladness. A family is a clan held together with the glue of love and the cement of mutual respect. A family is a shelter from the storm, a friendly port when the waves of life become too wild. No person is ever alone who is a member of a family.**"

May God bless the family.