



Series: EXTREME MAKEOVER: HOME EDITION  
Sermon: "The Family Room - Building Homes of Honor"  
Scripture: Joshua 24:14-15  
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I don't remember who it was, but somebody sent me an e-mail about a little boy in Sunday School class, and it sort of reminded me of my house. Apparently, his Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with the whole class of five and six-year-olds. After explaining the commandment to honor thy father and thy mother, she asked, "Boys and girls, is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?" Without missing a beat, the little boy shouted out, "I know. Thou shall not kill."

Do you resonate with that? If your house is anything like ours, there are days when you wonder who is going to survive until bed time because people are "at it" with each other. Simply put, some days we just do not have it all together, and we do not always treat each other the way we should. There have been days like this when I get to the end of it, and I'm lying in bed wondering why it is like this. The more I have thought about it, the more I have concluded that these chaotic days are just symptoms of a deeper problem. I have asked myself more than once, "Could it be that there is a better way?"

Last week, as we began this new sermon series, we learned that there is a better way. More specifically, we learned that God seeks to transform – not our houses – but the people who live there. Today, we are going to talk about building homes of honor. Put another way – if we are to declare like Joshua did in the Old Testament, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," what is it we should practice in our homes to make this so? To answer that question, let me share with you four (4) elements of a home that honors God.

Number one – UNCONDITIONAL LOVE. Do you know what amazes me? Just about anyone raised in the church knows John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." But how many of you know 1 John 3:16? It's just as important! Listen: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." You see, we like that Jesus loving us part! Where we stumble is when God challenges us to love in the same way. I do not know about you, but I find it real easy to say, "I would lay my life down for you." You know why? Because in all likelihood, I will never be in a situation where I have to prove it – talk is easy!

But John was not finished. Listen to verse 18: "Dear children, let us not love with

words or tongue but with actions and in truth." In other words, John says, "Don't tell me you love me! Show me you love me!" You need to know there are three (3) different Greek words for love in the New Testament – each with a different shade of meaning: 1) eros – which is sexual attraction; 2) phila – which means friendship; and 3) agape – which is self-sacrificing, unconditional. Most people know how to love in the first two ways. Whether Jesus Christ is in your life or not, you are capable of loving in these ways; however, we humans are incapable of expressing the third type of love on our own. The reason? The Bible says that God is love — He is agape. So, the only way to express agape, is to have agape in your life because unconditional love does not come to us naturally.

What does come to us naturally is contractual love. "I will love you as long as you...". This gives us power and control – but it is not God's way. God's love is unconditional – meaning there is nothing you can do to make God stop loving you. His love is absolutely without conditions; however, we must understand that while his love for us is unconditional, his blessings are very conditional. Blessings come from obedience. This is the same principle we must build into our homes. Our blessings should be conditional – but our family members must know that we love them no matter how they act or what they do.

For example, I have a 23-year old daughter who used to attend Miami University in Oxford. And like many college students – in spite of my clear warnings to her – she made very poor financial decisions. She would spend money frivolously and, as a result, she would not have the money to pay her electric bill or her rent. And when that happened, I chose not to bless her with my money because she chose to ignore my instruction. At the end of the day, though, she is still my daughter – my flesh and blood - and I still love her. You see, that is the unconditional side of love that does not come naturally to us – that is agape love. And that is the kind of love that honors God. Agape love is the first element every home needs.

The next element is – ATTENTION. Why? Because healthy families give attention to each other and, if there is something that gets in the way of this action, it would have to be the television. You could also insert the computer or any other attention stealer in the home. I am guilty here because I am a news junkie. I flip between Fox, MSNBC and CNN constantly. Add to that a dash of the Discovery Channel and a sprinkle of the Weather Channel and you have got the recipe for my evening. But you know what really forced me to see how much attention I give television? This birthday card I received a couple of years ago. My son, Andy, gave me this interesting birthday card. The outside of the card reads, "Here it is Dad, the latest breakthrough in birthday cards." Then the inside has a big hole in the center and says, "You can read it without taking your eyes off the T.V."

The remote control to your television is not just for channel surfing, it also can help us turn the television off. Why? Listen to the apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians, chapter two and verse four: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Shutting off the television is just one way we can do this; but there is another issue we face, even when the television is off. For example, look at the person to your right. Count how many ears they have. Now count how many mouths they have. Now look at the person to your left. Count ears and mouths again. Now have somebody either on your right or left count your ears and mouths. What have you discovered from this exercise? God gave us two ears and one mouth – now do the math. That tells me we should listen twice as much as we talk!

So be a good listener – really listen! And as you really listen and think about what

the other person is saying, allow people to finish their thoughts and ideas before interrupting. For some here today like me who happen to be “E” personalities, this is really difficult. Do you know why? Because “E” stands for “expressor” and expressors love to talk so much that we do not always focus on what the other person is saying. As you talk to us, we are already thinking about what we are going to say next. On the other side of the coin are those who listen so well they never speak. And if we never say anything, the other person does not feel we have given them the attention they need. The way I see it, the solution is real simple. To live out Paul’s challenge, some of us will need to really listen more by turning off the T.V., getting away from the computer or putting down the newspaper. And others of us – after we have listened – need to take the risk to speak up more.

That brings us to element number three – ENCOURAGEMENT. Friends, what do we use to encourage? Words. The Bible says that the power of life and death are in the power of the tongue, and no where is this verse more real than in our homes. The Bible has so much to say about our words. Notice Paul’s challenge in Ephesians 4:29 – “Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.” Moms and dads, when it comes to parenting, we absolutely must break the disobedient will in our kids. Trust me – you will be sorry if you do not! But we must never break their spirit. More specifically, it is a flat out sin to run your kids or your spouse down all the time. “You’re fat. You’re stupid. You’ll never amount to anything.” These are words that crush a child’s spirit and guess what? You’re going to eat the fruit of your words.

In due time, the other person will avenge themselves and will put you down. Eventually, everyone is debasing everyone, and everyone will lose in this “game”. From a spiritual point of view, shaming words are curses.

On the contrary, God wants us to bless our children. Words of acceptance and encouragement are blessings. How many (or how few) children hear their parents say: “I love you” or “I am happy that you are my child” or “You are precious to me”? Families of honor inspire with encouragement. Therefore, we must discover the power of the blessing. Let me give you some ideas I discovered in my research last week: 1) be liberal with your praise (“Great report card! You look marvelous! Way to hit that ball! Thanks for being kind to your friend!); and 2) speak prophetically over them (“You’re an awesome young man of God! You’re a young lady of honor and virtue! God has His hand of blessing on your life!”). Leave notes expressing your love and appreciation for them. Overall, we have to keep in mind that often times our kids – and maybe even our spouse – will become exactly what we tell them they will become.

That brings us to the final element – FUN. Listen to Proverbs 17:22 from The Message: “A cheerful disposition is good for your health; gloom and doom leave you bone-tired.” A man named Robert Orbern once said, “Who can ever forget Winston Churchill’s immortal words: ‘We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds; we shall fight in the fields and in the streets. We shall fight in the hills.’” To which Orbern commented, “That sounds exactly like our family vacation.” Friends, God never intended for his people to be lifeless joy deprived people. So have some fun around your house, for crying out loud! Have you ever wondered why so many teens stray from the faith? Could it be that they have never been allowed to have fun as Christians? Could it be that they view Christianity as a gloom and doom religion?

On the contrary, the way I see it, our faith is an adventure so awesome that even in the most difficult circumstances we can still praise God for His goodness in our lives.

Our faith is a journey to live out life and to live it “more abundantly”! For that reason, faith dictates that our homes should also be a place of fun and joy. Need some ideas? Try these 4 ideas: 1) schedule play and recreation time; 2) do the unexpected; 3) plan surprises; and 4) learn to laugh at yourself – everyone else has!

A couple years ago, we had the best family vacation ever. We went all the way up to some gorgeous lakes in Northern Michigan. One day, we were out on the lake and I had some kids with me in the row boat. Jennifer had one of the kids in the canoe and, for some reason or another, we started racing. I was sure I could beat them, so I started rowing fast and furious. I plunged those oars deep into the water, and I pulled them as hard as I could. They were getting ahead of me, so I tried to go faster. Then it happened – right in the middle of a huge pull while the oar was deep in the water, the pin on the oar sheared off and the next thing I know, I am on my back at the bottom of the boat, looking up at the blue sky! All I could hear was laughter all around me. And for just a split second, I had to make a choice. I could get mad and be offended because they were laughing at me. I mean after all, I could have gotten hurt! But the truth is, I was not hurt physically – my ego was just a little bruised. The second choice I had was to realize how funny that I must look with my legs and feet straight up in the air. From the shore, that is probably all you could see of me! Thankfully, I chose the second option.

Another time away, we went camping near Cincinnati, and one day we went to The Beach Water Park where they have the big wave pool and those nice lounge chairs. In my mind, the plan was to spend all my time there in the lounge chair; but the kids and a few adults had other ideas – most notably the big wild slides. It was then that I sort of wondered when I became so lame and boring. I thought to myself, “You can’t come to the Beach and not go down those slides!” So, to the surprise of my kids, I did. And as I was writing this message and I remembered these episodes of vacation spontaneity and humor, a thought came to me. I think it was a God-thought and it was this: “Why does it take a vacation to be this way? Why not be a little more like this at 1357 Creekside Place (our home) where you spend most of your time?”

Could God be asking you the same question this morning? Do you have fun in your home? Is there encouragement? Do people give others their undivided attention? Is there unconditional love? You see, that is what it takes to build a home that honors God. That is what we should be aiming for every day. By the way, did you know that a home that is operating this way can save you money? I read an article in a 2004 edition of Newsweek entitled, “Let’s Hug” which relates a new fad in our country. In an age of “No Touch” rules in schools, sexual harassment lawsuits in the sports world, and zero tolerance policies in the work place, the pendulum appears to have swung. Cuddle Parties are growing in popularity throughout the United States.

During the typical Cuddle Party, participants will spend \$30 for the promise of several evening hours of snuggling and hugging with as many as 20 complete strangers. Cynics will be surprised that any hint of sex is strictly forbidden. The sixteen rules, found at [www.cuddleparty.com](http://www.cuddleparty.com), are intended to create a safe environment for huggers to get the “touch and affection” missing from everyday life without the threat of unwanted advances. Huggers of all ages are encouraged to bring pajamas (“more comfy than sexy”), stuffed animals, munchies, and the anticipation of becoming more secure and approachable than ever before. Can you believe that? People are paying \$30 for snuggling, hugging, and a sense of security.

Friends, save yourself \$30 – God has a better plan. It is called the family!