

“Our Precious Families”

Off The Top of My Head. March 22, 2007. By Dave Gibson.

Last year on October 17th I gave a message on loving our families well. At the end of that message I asked everyone to take a small card out of their bulletin and fill in a single family commitment they would be willing to make. Folks then put that card in a basket at the front of the room. More than 600 cards were placed in the baskets that day—each one containing promises of new actions or new thoughts or new words toward family members. Each card came from a heart that recognized the value of family and also recognized the importance of greater love for their families.

Recently I read those cards and categorized the commitments. The commitments broke down into 24 different categories. The top three categories each received over 100 commitments. These three categories essentially doubled the other categories in the tally—showing the strong desires to improve these three areas.

The major commitment that folks made that day was to spend more time with their families (114 responders). What a great commitment! I spend a fair amount of time with Kathi and I spent a fair amount of time with my children when they lived with me. I can assure you that if I have any regret about my parenting it is that I did not spend near enough time with my children. Genesis 2 and 3 clearly point out that we are sinners and clearly our sin has a negative impact on our families. Genesis 2 also makes it clear that one of our problems is aloneness. We are, to one degree or another, distant from each other. We fail to connect with each other. We fail to understand each other and to share ourselves with each other.

If my kids were home I would take them on more dates, I would plan more activities with them, I would walk into their rooms more often and engage them in conversation, I would ask them more questions, I would be more faithful about my days off, and I would work harder to be with them. I would work a lot harder than I did to make it clear that I love and value them and that I desperately want a good relationship with each one of them.

Additionally, as has often been said, “Faith and values are more caught than taught.” Not only does time together enhance relationship it also enhances discipleship.

The second commitment, by a single vote, was to improve relationship with God as part of being a better family member and responding to each other with improved relationship styles (113). There was a clear recognition that the closer I am to God the better family member I am and the better my ability to be close to my family members. Many, many people made commitments to better prayer lives, devotional lives, Bible study, and other spiritual disciplines.

The condition of our inner spiritual lives is lived out in every aspect of our outer lives. Inner maturity and spiritual health will always surface in quality family relationships,

great financial stewardship, good physical fitness, humble service, and words of grace, truth, and edification. Drawing near to God is a huge reward in itself. The many “by-products” of a healthy spiritual life are terrific.

The third place commitment was to pray with and for family members (101). I would imagine one of the greatest failures our family lives is the failure to pray with and pray for our family members. Some families pray together only at meal times or not at all. Some families pray only in times of death and crisis. Some family members rarely or never pray for the others in their families.

Prayer is the greatest help, highest impact, highest blessing, highest leverage, highest good, that we can do for our families. Hudson Taylor once said, “When we work we work but when we pray God works.” We can work real hard to influence and empower our family members or we can pray real hard for the all-wise, all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful God of the universe to influence and enable them. When you think about it that way it does not seem like much of a decision.