

Overcoming Dysfunctional Family Patterns

Restoring My Soul – Session #7
Based on *Restoring My Soul* by Bill Flatt

Family Matters

- Dysfunctional – to interact and live in unhealthy ways; being non-productive, not constructive. Such people are not supportive although they may intend to be.
- Patterns – habitual ways people interact; can be good or bad.
- Adam and Eve’s Family
 - Listened to bad advice, disobeyed, blamed each other, survived through pain and toil, became angry and jealous, and committed murder.
- Abraham’s Family
 - Abraham lied about marital status (not once, but twice), had a child by Sarah’s servant, showed favoritism, drove Ishmael out, Isaac lied about his marital status, showed favoritism, Jacob deceived his brother and father, was tricked by his uncle, and showed favoritism, Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery.
- David’s Family
 - Had several wives and concubines, married Michal for political reasons, committed adultery, arranged for Uriah to be killed, Amnon raped his sister Tamar, was killed by his half-brother Absalom, Absalom led a rebellion, Solomon killed his brother Adonijah, multiplied his wives, worshipped idols, Rehoboam was harder on the people than Solomon, the kingdom was split.

Healthy Families Are...(From Bill Flatt’s book *Building Healthy Families*)

1. Built on a solid foundation.
2. Committed.
3. Emotionally mature.
4. Developing spiritually.
5. Built on love and affection.
6. Built around a healthy family structure.
7. Led by effective parents.
8. Communicate effectively and grow through difficulties.
9. Able to grow and change from one stage of development to another.
10. Able to cope successfully with anger and manage conflict well.
11. Able to cope with crises.
12. Able to laugh with each other.
13. Built with self-esteem.
14. Constantly making efforts to prevent divorce.
15. Maintaining realistic expectations.
16. Spending a significant amount of quality time with each other.
17. Working and assuming appropriate responsibilities.
18. Willing to seek help when they need it.

How to Communicate Effectively With Family Members

- Try to be a decent human being yourself; mature, with the right attitude.
 - Mt. 7:12 – The Golden Rule
 - Pr. 4:23 – “Guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life.”
- Guard your mouth.
 - We don’t have to say everything that we think.
 - Pr. 21:23 – “He who guards his mouth and tongue keeps himself from calamity.”
- Listen emphatically and carefully.
 - Pr. 18:13 – “He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame.”
- Speak softly with a constructive message.
 - Pr. 15:1 – “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
 - Pr. 25:11 – “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”
- Learn how to cope with anger.
 - Pr. 19:11 – “A man’s wisdom gives him patience.”
- Be kind to each other.
 - Pr. 12:25 – “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down ... a good word makes it glad.” Kind words can make other family members glad.
- Forgive each other.
 - Luke 6:36 – “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”
 - In Genesis 37-50, Joseph is kind to his brothers, even after what they had done.
- Solve deep-seated foundational problems that cause communication problems.
 - Pr. 18:17 – “The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.”
- Identify dysfunctional interaction patterns and do something more constructive.
 - Remember your strengths and look for solutions, not just problems.

Principles for Overcoming Dysfunctional Family Patterns

- Respect what God has said and obey Him.
- Don’t always think that what you don’t have is better.
- Don’t be jealous of the accomplishments of other family members.
- Be honest, even if it gets you into trouble. Do it with kindness, but be honest.
- Face your problems and take responsibility.
- Reconcile with others. Be a peacemaker.
- Seek God’s favor, His direction and strength.
- Learn to believe in the providence of God when times look dark.
- Learn to resist temptation.
- Don’t try to cover up one sin by committing another.
- Don’t marry for the wrong reasons.
- Value family. They will likely be with you when others won’t.
- Cleave to your spouse.
- Express appreciation.
- Learn to communicate effectively.
- Nurture your spirituality: utilize your spiritual resources.
- Live congruently with your values and beliefs.
- Focus on strengths and potentials rather than weaknesses and failures.
- Learn to grow through difficulties.
- If it doesn’t work, do something different.