

Monday:

In the message this past weekend, Paul talked about the different environments we can create as parents. It is possible that our behavior works to create environments of fear, shame or doubt. It is also possible that our behavior works to create environments of fun, security, love and affection. As we begin this week of devotions, let's take a look at some of the environments two fathers from Scripture provided for their families.

Read Genesis 37:12-35. What kind of environments do you think Jacob created as a father that may have led to his sons turning on their brother Joseph the way they did?
In verses 34 and 35 we see all of Jacob's sons and daughters come to comfort him when he thought his son Joseph had been killed. Imagine how the other children would have felt as their father refused to be comforted, even to the point of saying he would continue to mourn until he died and went to be with Joseph. How does this example of Jacob's behavior lend itself to creating environments of fear, shame and doubt? One way of looking at Jacob is that his behavior was basically telling the rest of his children that they were not as important to him as Joseph was. His reaction may have created a sense of shame in them, leaving them to believe they are not as good as Joseph. This also may have created a sense of doubt and would have left them wondering if their father even loved them.

Read Luke 15:11-32. In this parable, what kind of environment do you think the father created for his son in that as his son returned, the father ran to meet him on the road? (Verse 20)
The father's reaction let the son know his love as well as the security he had in him, despite all of the poor and foolish choices the son had made.

If you are a parent, think about the environments you create with your children no matter their ages. What are some thoughts as you ponder on the environments of fear vs. fun, shame vs. love/affection and doubt vs. security? What environments would your actions lend themselves to?
As we have been learning in this series, awareness is the first step to understanding how to take steps toward health in our families. Today we want to start to have awareness of the environments we create within our families.

What about the environments you grew up in? What kind of environments did your family create? If all you think of are environments of fear, shame and doubt, challenge yourself to think of something positive. Ask God to bring to your mind a time in which you had fun with your family, a time in which you felt love and affection from your family, and/or a time in which you felt secure. In our families today, as well as our families in the past, all these environments exist at one time or another depending upon the situations and seasons.

Write your thoughts here:

Spend time in prayer as you begin to have awareness to the environment you grew up in, as well as the environment you currently create in your own family.

Thursday:

As we think about the environments that were created in our family of origin as well as the environments we are creating in our families today, it could be that we see more environments of fear, shame and doubt than we see environments of fun, security, love and affection.

We have an enemy in this world. He is at work to create environments of fear, shame and doubt whether we realize it or not. Sometimes we become focused on a family member instead of stepping back and realizing how the enemy might be at work. God is working to bring health and healing to our life, while the enemy is working to destroy us and our families.

As we end this series, we want to take time to not only write a letter to our earthly father, but we also want to take time to write a prayer to our Heavenly Father.

What behaviors have been passed down in your family? What good family roots do you want God to continue to grow? What bad roots do you want God to work to remove?

For example:

Colossians 3:21

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Hebrews 12:15

¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

Mark 7:20-23

²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Luke 8:15

¹⁵ As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

Spend time writing a prayer for your family. Pray over the past, asking for forgiveness for what needs to be forgiven as well as bringing thanksgiving for all the good God has done. Pray over the present. Ask for specific good roots to be established in Christ and by the Holy Spirit ask that these good roots continue to grow for the future generations of your family. Pray for the future generations, sharing specific Scriptures. Ask God for His healing and ask Him to break bonds that have held your family captive over the years. Keep your prayer in your Bible. Plan to pray it over your family often, continuing to let the truths God has shown you in this series bear fruit in you and in the future generations of your family.

Friday:

Take a few deep breaths and settle into silence.

Choose a very simple prayer to express your openness and desire for God to work in you.

(Example: *Abba, Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I belong to You.*)

Close your eyes and offer your prayer to Jesus, allowing His will and love full access into your entire being. If/when you become distracted, offer again your simple prayer to God.

Pray Philippians 1:6. Because God is our Everlasting Father, we can learn to be people who leave healthy legacies in our families. Thank God for his deep and everlasting love. Thank Him that the work He has begun in you He will complete in Christ Jesus. Thank Him that this work will leave a healthy legacy for your family.

Philippians 1:6

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

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Tuesday:

During the 5 weeks of the Entrusted series so far, we have been taught that awareness is the first key to unlocking a healthy relational legacy. We have also been shown that God gives us the “one another” verses to help us understand how to have healthy, God-centered relationships. The one another verses in Scripture give mindfulness to what we do well in relationships, as well as what is more difficult for us.

During the first week of the Entrusted Series, we looked at John 13:34-35. We learned that in relationships Jesus teaches us to love one another.

Read John 13:34-35

³⁴ *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* ³⁵ *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

How did you experience love in your family of origin? How does this translate into your family to-day?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

As Paul shared in the message this weekend, the environments created in our family or origin as well as the environments we create in our family now, are meant to be environments of love. During the first week of devotions, we looked at how we love one another. We asked ourselves these questions:

- Am I patient?
- Am I kind?
- Do I envy?
- Do I boast?
- Am I arrogant?
- Am I rude?
- Do I insist in my own way?
- Am I irritable?
- Am I resentful?
- Do I rejoice in wrongdoing or do I rejoice in truth?

Over the past 5 weeks, has God brought awareness to you in the way you and your family choose to love one another? If you developed unhealthy habits due to your family of origin or from your own choosing, what steps toward health do you feel God asking you to take through this series? For example, maybe you have discovered you are envious of others you are in relationship with. Has that awareness brought you to a place of repentance?

Maybe you realized over the last 5 weeks that you are irritable and rude in relationships. How have you taken steps toward learning to love as God teaches through His Word?

As you think about the environments you grew up in, what comes to mind? Do you find yourself resentful? If so, give this resentment to God. Ask Him to create in you a heart of forgiveness and peace.

Maybe you realize through this series that you are creating environments in your family today that differ from God’s definition of love. Seek His will for you. What step would God like you to take? Spend time in prayer. Ask for His wisdom and understanding. Ask Him to give you clarity as we end this series so that the awareness you have will move to a place of intentionality and integration.

Wednesday:

On Monday of this week, you were challenged to think of a few examples of positive environments your family of origin created for you. Were you able to think of a time in which you had fun with your family? What about a time in which you felt love and affection from your family? Or a time in which you felt secure? We recognize all the environments we have talked about this week exist in our family at one time or another depending upon the situation or the season.

As we find God as our Father, He works to bring health and healing to every area of our life. One of the ways He does this is by helping us find healing through the good and bad of our past. Today in your quiet time, we would like you to write a letter to your earthly father. If your father has passed away, write the letter and tuck it away. If you father is alive, decide if you want to mail the letter. If you decide not to mail it, that is okay; maybe it will be a letter you give your own children to read one day in the future, or maybe it will simply be a meaningful personal experience for you.

If you struggle with this exercise, there may be a reason why you are unable to write a letter to your earthly father. That is okay. Write to another member of your immediate family instead, or take time to write a letter to your Heavenly Father. The goal in writing this letter is to bring understanding and healing to you and your past.

In the letter, focus on the things you are grateful for in your father, family member or in God. Work to bring good memories alive, not because we want to discount the bad ones, but because our tendency is to focus on the bad rather than the good. If you harbor bitterness and resentment, ask yourself why? Think about the generations in your family. Reflect upon your father or your other family member’s upbringing. Maybe through this time you can see how what they experienced created an environment for them and in turn this environment worked to create the environment you experienced. If you are struggling with this concept, a helpful article to read is:

<http://annvoskamp.com/2017/06/why-we-really-need-to-stop-the-blame-game-and-turn-our-hearts-downriver/>

In week 3 we studied these verses: **Read Romans 12:10, Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, and Ephesians 6:2.** Refer back to these Scriptures as you prepare to write your letter.

As you work through this exercise, we recognize how incredibly difficult this may be. For the sake of the generations coming after us, we are invited to learn to treat our family with honor. As you write your letter, write with the focus of honor. Remember, if there is abuse and evil in your family, we do not justify or condone it. As you write, look for any good that may be in your legacy from them. In your letter, work to forgive and to let go of bitterness. Don’t allow resentment and the failures of your family to determine your life. Choose to be free in Christ. Christ gives us freedom and hope. We are now in His family and when we honor our earthly family we honor Him.

Take time to write your letter. Today may be the starting point and it may take you a few days or longer to complete. Remember this letter is an exercise to redeem the good. You may have to work to find the good, but in every life it is there. Tell your father the ways you see goodness in your life because of him.