



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

7643 Huron River Drive

Dexter, MI 48130

734-426-8480

Extreme Home Makeover: Discipleship Edition

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Dr. Matthew J. Hook

Deuteronomy 6:4 – 9

After sharing last week, I found out my life wasn't the only one that was fraying around the edges. (I don't know if that's good news or bad! ☺) Why do we need an extreme home makeover? Why is it so difficult to get this home? We talked about the myth that messes us up: We think God takes attendance. We saw how we have this tendency to make Christianity all about Sunday, when the truth is, being a Christ follower is all about Monday—Saturday. That's a tough jump to make, for several reasons:

- We were never taught. We didn't experience what it was like to have Christ as a part of our homes growing up. Not that our parents didn't do the best they could, just that we didn't learn how to pray together, or grow in faith together, or disciple one another.
- Convenience: The church enabled us *not* to have to do it at home, spreading the drop-off mentality. "You just get 'em here, and we'll take care of it!"
- Fear: from the expert mentality. (Soccer? Coach. Dance? Teacher. Spanish? Teacher. Piano? Get a teacher). Of course, every teacher will tell you they can't accomplish much without direct parental leadership in those areas. Sometimes we sign them up for year-round, or extra lessons, because we can't do it.
- Embarrassment: We're afraid we'll look like hypocrites in front of our children. (Yup. It's true. But don't worry. If they're old enough, they already know it. And thanks to God, as you grow and live for Christ, it actually happens less and less.) And when you do mess up, that's when you demonstrate how to ask forgiveness. We do get embarrassed. It just feels goofy. (I know it does. It does for me, and I'm the pastor!)
- Inane busyness: Families got busier. Activities grew to include every day of the week, and all seasons.
- Technology exploded. (from radio...to TV w/3 channels...to TV w/100s of channels...to videos...to computers...to cell phones...to ipods...to itouch's... It's about as insulated and isolated (in the name of connection) as you can get!
- Less parental time available. (remember in the '80s when they thought people's leisure time would increase and work weeks would move toward 30 hours per week?)
 - More folks have suffered through divorce than ever, meaning more 1 parent families.
 - To keep up with the times, more families have moved to 2 incomes than ever before.

We may go to church, but we don't bring home the most important thing we need: faith! The truly sad fact is, whether or not you think you are, you're discipling them. You're already teaching your family & friends. (The question is, in what?) Here's a possible list, some good, some bad. Some you'd find in our home, some you might find in your home: Good manners (check!) How to carry a conversation. How to get frustrated at too-slow drivers. How to write people you care about. How to learn. How to cook. How to listen all the way through. How to yell. How to make fun of someone who's a little weird. How to be generous? How to be flakey. How to serve others & care for them. How to watch trashy TV. How to ignore others around you. How to avoid responsibility. Okay

enough.

But what about how to turn off the TV & computer & read the Bible? How to pray when things are good? How to pray when things are bad? How to serve your neighbor? How to talk about what God thinks would be best for you? How to minister at your church? In your neighborhood? How to invite someone to church? How to tell someone about Jesus?

Any coach will tell you parents play the #1 role in reinforcing that instruction in the home. Listen to how Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation put it. "Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priest to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel." (or not!)

We know less that 10% do anything about it at home. In Christ following homes, only 28% of moms and 13% of dads have talked with their kids about faith. The question is not "Are we passing things on to our children?" It's "What are we passing on to our children?"

Today, it's like Satan has moved the battle. He wants to bring down Christianity. Instead of attacking the church as a whole, he's doing this: like trying to break a bundle of pencils is impossible. But if you take one pencil out at a time, it's a snap. Satan wants to destroy you and me. And he's doing it one home at a time. It's like he says "If I can take Christ and Christlike living out of each and every household, snap. I can break this thing called Christianity for now and for generations to come.

The good news: whenever we bring Jesus next to Satan: Jesus wins. Our opportunity is to bring Christ and Christlike living to the center of the home, and Satan will run. And God is not intimidated by your messy situation, or mine. And His offer to make over your family isn't a one-time-only offer.

"4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Hear, O people of Dexter Methodist Church. Your job, as the leader of your home is to keep the main thing the main thing. Reggie Joiner notes the principles Moses develops:

- **Relationship** comes before rules. It's "*Love the Lord your God.*" It's about love. Again, Christianity's not a religion. It's a relationship. Same goes for you with the people around you. Love comes first.
- Truth must be in **you** before it can be in them. "*These...are to be upon your hearts.*"
- Each day offers natural **opportunities** for teaching
 - When you sit at home: meal time. (I've been the token clergy on the Reproductive Health Advisory Committee for Dexter Schools, and I keep reminding them the top influencer to prevention is family mealtime. Statistically, it is a bigger factor than sports, church, or anything else. It can be hot dogs or P&J's, but around the table something powerful can happen. The first stat alone makes me want to commit to this: There is a 70% lower risk for substance abuse in the lives of those kids who eat regular family dinners. I know it's difficult, but so what?)
 - When you walk along the road: drive time. (Everyone has to take everything out of their ears!) ☺
 - When you lie down: bedtime.

- When you get up: get-ready time.
- **Repetition** is the teacher's best friend: (8, 9). Repetition is the teacher's best friend. (If you have kids at home, don't get made. Just accept that you're going to have to repeat it. Often. It's biblical!) Imagine if God got as mad at you as you get at your kids when God was first trying to get your attention. Hit your family and friends from many different angles.

It doesn't have to be fancy, and it doesn't have to be deep. The Key to devotions: **Simplicity**. Look at Jesus: His teaching style was outdoors, indoors, sitting, walking, standing anytime or place, simple stuff like trees and birds, farms and seeds, sowers and reapers. He shared from life around them. And they weren't sermons! They were little one liners and mini-stories. Notice the "Faith 5." It says "5 minutes": highs/lows, a verse, a short prayer.

Moses' principles can work in *your* home, whether you are single in an apartment, or empty-nesters. But there's a key that's all but invisible in these passages. Notice the word that's repeated most: **Your** God, **your** heart, **your** soul, **your** strength. The key is recognizing that you have one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who made you wonderfully and uniquely and loves you so much that He saw you in your messed up state, headed for destruction, and sent His only begotten Son to die for you so that you can have new life filled with peace, hope, and assurance. It all starts with your willingness to allow Him into your life and the very core of your family. **Your extreme home makeover begins with a makeover of your own heart.** If you're like me, you wish the people around you had a stronger faith. And while that's good, the truth is what we see in the people we love around us is a reflection of our own faith. **You can't lead people where you aren't going yourself.** The issue is not their faith, *it's ours*. Yikes!

Where is Christ in your life? Is He at the center, influencing your decisions, or is He still on the outside knocking? Your answer is so important because it directly relates to your home. [MEDIA CLIP: THE STOOL]

May you choose this day whom you will serve. As for me, (it has to be me first) and my house, we will serve the Lord. Won't you make the choice and take the plunge?