

Advent 2020

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Week 3 – God desires revival in relationships.

Production Notes:

- Insert the pictures of my family. I will call for them during the introduction.
- Green highlights go on the screen.

Introduction:

In 1938, during the Great Depression, scientists began tracking the health of 268 Harvard sophomores. They hoped the longitudinal study would reveal clues to leading healthy and happy lives.¹

They found the answer. As interesting as the answer are the things that weren't.

It's not primarily in working out.

It's not primarily in low cholesterol.

It's not primarily in great genetics.

It's not even in being pain free in your older years.

Here: I have it on the screen. Ok, not that, that's my family, but your family. Note, I have my physical family and my accountability group, my spiritual family.

It's by far in having and building healthy relationships with those you are closest to. Especially with your kids and spouse.

Listen to some of these quotes.

"When we gathered together everything we knew about them about at age 50, it wasn't their middle-age cholesterol levels that predicted how they were going to grow old. It was how satisfied they were in their relationships. The people who were the most satisfied in their relationships at age 50 were the healthiest at age 80."

"The researchers also found that marital satisfaction has a protective effect on people's mental health. Part of a study found that people who had happy marriages in their 80s reported that their moods didn't suffer even on the days when they had more physical pain. Those who had unhappy marriages felt both more emotional and physical pain."

"Loneliness kills, It's as powerful as smoking or alcoholism."

Strong healthy relationships are a greater predictor of future health and happiness than the hours you spend on the treadmill, perfecting those cholesterol levels, or even money itself.

We all need a group we can say, "That's my family. They know and want me, and I know and want them."

¹ Harvard Gazette, Good genes are nice, but joy is better; <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/> last accessed December 10, 2020.

To the text:

Let me take you back almost 3,000 years. It's ancient Mesopotamia and God has raised up a prophet named Isaiah. For those that are new a prophet is literally someone who merely hears from God and shares what he hears with others.

Isaiah 61:1-3 (ESV):

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion — to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified."

- God has spoken to Isaiah. The promise is that He will send a new king, Immanuel, God with us (ch.7). This will do something extraordinary. It will both bring hope to some and harden hearts for others. This new king will open his arms to all. However, the proud will reject the king's kingdom and family. This will bring about their own destruction. The humble will embrace it and find and participate in a forever kingdom and family of charitable love.
- Continuing from last week. Not only personal revival but social revival also begins with a heart of humility. Remember: **It's about the heart posture of humility. "...rend your hearts not your garments"** (Joel 2:13).
- This is the grand mission of God. To reestablish an Eden, to usher in a kingdom and family so good that it can last forever. The war over this forever kingdom happens in our hearts. **Everything external, every piece of art, every technological advancement, every society that has been formed – the good or evil it accomplishes begins in the hearts of those involved.** The question that remains is, how? How do we take this fight for righteousness into our hearts? Nearly a thousand years after this was written Jesus enters the scene (Luke 4:16-19) and says, I got this. I am this king and I can show the way, follow me.
- **We also see from this text the ones most likely to trust God, and ultimately Jesus, are ones who know they need it. Self-sufficiency is as much a curse as it is a blessing.** Do you trust in your wisdom first, in how you deal with money, material things, people that have wronged you, people of another race, color or socioeconomic level, or even what you can and can't do with your body?
- Many of you are "justice warriors," but it isn't Christian justice you fight for, it's another kingdom, a Tower of Babel, a manmade kingdom. Will you choose humility before God or will your own pride keep you from Christ's kingdom?

What does this mean for us?

- To those that see themselves as gifted - God gives worth to the people you may not see as worthy.

- To those that see themselves as worthless - God sees us in our worst state and says, "I see who you truly are and I still choose you."
- To those that are in hard situations - God sees your hurt and he is coming to rescue you. Your pain isn't forever.

Final Thoughts:

As the Harvard research suggests, the greatest desire of the human heart is to be known and chosen. It's to be in a healthy family. God doesn't just offer that to us. He wants us to offer it to others. To be in His kingdom, His family.

Next Steps Cards:

Is there a pride or sin that you know is holding you back from moving deeper into God's family?