

## Sunday School Lesson for the Month of September 2013

### **Healthy Families Are No Accident**

*(Matthew 7:1-14)*

**Sunday, September 1, 2013**

Healthy families are no accident, and they are usually happy families. Happiness should not be our goal. It is not something we find at the end of the rainbow. It is what happens to us along the way to building a meaningful, purposeful life.

Families, like people, get sick sometimes. We are not always healthy. But when we get sick, we should want to get well. Sometimes it is harder for sick families to get well than it is for sick bodies to heal, because we have trouble admitting that our families are sick. Sick families can get well, but healing doesn't happen automatically. It happens only when people are determined to change their lifestyle. In our text from the Sermon on the Mount, we learn some exciting truths that can be applied to family life.

#### **1. Healthy families are the result of deliberate choice (Matthew 7:13-14).**

These two verses talk about the two ways of life. The two choices and what Jesus says in these two verses is that everyone must choose either one or the other of two ways. And what He is saying is that the choice of the one way leads to heaven; the choice of the other leads to hell. God's way is not easy to find, nor is it easy to walk in once we find it. There are easier ways to life than to live God's way. The traffic that moves in the direction of the world follows a crowded thoroughfare. People who justify their choices by saying, "Everybody is doing it," are walking on that well-traveled path.

But God's Word is dear. If we want to find life, we will often be on a lonely road. That's one reason churches are so important to Christian families. We gather together in the church, not because we're perfect and not because we're always what we ought to be, but because we understand the ground rules and we know when we're in foul territory. The world doesn't even know there is an out-of-bounds. They live bouncing off one wall to the other, never quite understanding why their lives keep getting shaken out of joint.

We know that our families are really hurting. As a church we are here to help one another, not only when we're well, but also when we're sick. But the church must be more than a hospital, more than a place that treats pain with quick fixes. In order to be well, we must make deliberate choices to that end. It isn't easy. It's costly. Sometimes we have to go against the current to escape what the world offers us. To be healthy, we must be different.

**Sunday, September 8, 2013**

**II. Healthy Families are built on thoughtful behavior toward one another (Matthew 7:12).**

This verse is the golden rule for families. “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.” You might translate it, “So whatever you wish your husband would do for you, do that for him.” Whatever you wish your wife would do for you, do that for her. Whatever you wish your children or whatever you wish your parents would do for you, do that for them.

A healthy family is not a fifty-fifty proposition. Every member has to give 100 percent. If you want more attention from your husband, give him more attention. If you want more love and affection from your wife, then ask yourself, “How can I be easier to love and to be affectionate with her?” And then give affection, as you would like to receive it. If you’re a child in your family, ask yourself, “How would I like for my children to treat me when I’m a parent? What kind of children do I want to have?”

The saddest thing about child-parent relationships is that the things we miss most in our parents are often the very things that are the hardest for us to give to our children. Parents, touch your children, hold them, be proud of them, believe in them, even if your parents didn’t do that for you. It’s not how others have treated you, but how you wish they had treated you. We all have scars. Some are more visible than others, but we don’t have to inflict the same thing on others that was inflicted on us. We need to learn how to treat family members right in spite of.....

**Sunday, September 15, 2013**

**III. Healthy Families are honest with one another (Matthew 7:1-5).**

When a husband and wife refuse to judge one another, they are on their way to being a healthy family. Parents are to respect one another and their children. Criticism and judgmental comments are not to be known in a Christian family. Parents who put their children into competitive modes, judging one child over the other, create heartache that can never be fully measured. Long after the parents are gone, that kind of mishandling will continue to hurt. These verses in Matthew 7 means that we are not to set ourselves up as though we’re perfect and the others in the family are somehow unworthy. We can’t hide a plank in our eye. We will never be healthy until we admit, “yes, that’s a plank in my eye; let’s get I out so we can work on the speck in yours.” Parents who understand this concept do better with their children. And children who understand this concept don’t have to judge their parents as harshly as they might otherwise.

**IV. Healthy Families are more interested in giving than getting (Matthew 7:2).**

We usually interpret this verse in terms of money, but it also has to do with loving and caring and being a family. We can't out give God. Nor can we out give a spouse or children or parents. Who give with no strings attached? When we give our heart and start to love others unconditionally, our gift of love comes back to us. To receive love we have to give it. It's a reciprocal process.

**Sunday, September 22, 2013**

**V. Healthy families are protected by faithfulness (Matthew 7:6).**

Matthew 7:6 has generally been used to describe how Christian witnessing ought to be done, but perhaps it has even more to do with marriage. A husband and wife are not to take the precious gift of their sexuality and cast it out before "dogs" or "hogs." Beware, because if you do, they will turn and trample you underfoot as they attack you. Healthy families are protected by fidelity and trustworthiness. You cannot get so modern or so sophisticated that you are permitted to ignore that admonition. Treasure your sexuality. Used within marriage, it is indeed holy and as precious as pearls. But nothing can tear a family apart as much as giving that which belongs only to each other to someone on the outside.

**Sunday, September 29, 2013**

**VI. Healthy families are enriched by prayer (Matthew 7:7-11).**

- A. If our family isn't healthy, we shouldn't abandon it any more than we would abandon a child who has gone to the hospital sick. Just because we're sick doesn't mean we're dead. Just because we're ill doesn't mean we can't get well. Prayer changes us and makes us ready for what God is ready to do in our lives.
- B. If we're healthy, we shouldn't be proud, but grateful. We should make our prayer one of thanksgiving to improve our decision-making, our thoughtfulness, our honesty with one another, our willingness to give, and our fidelity. We should be thankful for what God is doing in our family to help us remain strong against the evil all around us that threatens our most precious possessions.
- C. We shouldn't insist that everyone around us pray just as we pray. Some Christian homes would be healthier if there were not contest to see who is the most "spiritual." It is important to share our prayers together, and every child ought to hear his or her father and mother pray.

Healthy families are no accident. If your family is going to be healthy, then you need the Lord! You cannot do it without the Lord!!