

“Legacy: Rethinking Family Values.”
“Family Value #5 - “Widen the Circle”

Something that we have been learning in this series on Legacy: Rethinking Family Values is that parents are equipped to build a faith that lasts in the lives of their family. We can do it even if we don't do it perfectly all the time. There isn't any reason to be afraid or worried that we can't. The next generation needs each of us to take our responsibility to give them a legacy of our love for God.

Over the last several weeks we talked about some important family values to rethink. When building a legacy we need to share the value of

- **IMAGINE THE END** *in order to stay focused on the big picture . . . it is infinite love that is linked to His character*¹
- **FIGHT FOR THE HEART** *of their families to be loving God with all their hearts . . . it is a compelling love that moves us to trust our hearts*²
- **MAKE IT PERSONAL** *and let kids see what God is doing in their parents . . . it is a contagious love that we demonstrate personally.*³
- **CREATE A RHYTHM** *so time together as a family will nurture an everyday faith it is an everyday love that is developed in the rhythm of families' lives.*⁴

Today we are going to present the last family value and it is value that impacts every person who is part of this tribe called Bridge of Hope. Family Value #5 is **WIDEN THE CIRCLE** *and make sure kids have additional influences to guide them. . . it is an authentic love that connects us in wider circles with others.*⁵ This is about community and so we look at the beginning of how the shema starts off as Moses passes a living legacy to the Hebrew people.

(Joanne)

As wonderful as the truth we have been learning is, there is a reality we need to recognize. Research offers us some sobering realities regarding faith and the home:

- Fewer than 10% of parents who regularly attend church with their kids read the Bible together, pray together (Other than meal times) or participate in an act of service as a family unit.
- 28% of church youth have talked with mom about faith.
- Only 13% of church youth have talked with dad about faith.
- And finally, 69-94% of evangelical children are leaving the church shortly after they graduate from high school.⁶

¹ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

² Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

³ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

⁴ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

⁵ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

⁶ Mark Holman, What is Faith @ Home, faithathome.com

The reason that we have been teaching this series is because we need to change the course. Not only have we taught the principles of these family values we have provided ideas of ways to help reinforce the value at home where the deepest and most important truths are passed from one generation to the next. The family is in crisis because the family doesn't know how to develop a legacy to give to the next generation. Moses was trying to help the people of Israel and he was helping us when he said . . .

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV) *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

When Moses said, **Hear, O Israel**, he was talking to the

- **“COMMUNITY”**

1. Moses was speaking to all of Israel.
 - Hey . . . it wasn't only parents who were listening on that day.
 - There were grandpa's and grandma's listening; siblings were present, aunts and uncles were in the crowd, friends and neighbors, they were all there.
 - This was a community of people who came to hear about something valuable.
2. This appeal was about multigenerational support for parents and the next generation.
 - He was challenging all of Israel (Deuteronomy 5) an entire nation to step up and impact the next generation together.
 - This appeal we have looked at was to be practiced by the entire nation, every tribe, and each family.
 - The strategic role of the family was valued and supported by everyone.
 - Why? Because that was the best way to impact the next generation with the values we hold and our love for God.
3. This is about families in relationship with other families impacting one another in every level of life as it is lived.
 - Why?
 - Because the role of family was to impact the hearts of the next generation with a love for and trust in God.
4. “When Moses was delivering this message he was making this a national issue, and family issue”⁷

- **“REDISCOVERING THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNITY”**

1. Reggie Joiner writes, *“Moses is suggesting that you recognize why it's important to support the role of the family. If you are a parent, he is implying that the issue of your kids relationship with God is not your concern alone. You are not alone in your effort, nor should you try to do this alone.”*⁸

⁷ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 70

⁸ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 70

2. The question we need to ask is, “**HOW DO WE REDISCOVER THE HEBREW PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNITY?**”
3. Let’s start by debunking a couple of myths:
 - **HEBREW CULTURE** – some might say that all we need to do is simply copy the Hebrew way of living. Live like they lived in that time and then you can capture what they had. But we do not need to become Hebrews or Jews in our culture in order to rediscover the principle. We can look at what Moses taught and extract the principle of community. Then we take that principle and find ways to express it in our culture.
 - **SOLITARY INFLUENCE** – some might say that the only influence their child needs is themselves as parents. They are the solitary influence of their child and can provide all that the child needs. But we need to realize that no parent can do this alone. This is what Moses was saying. Every child needs multiple adult influences in their life. There are no super moms or dads, just regular moms and dads who need the help of other good people.
4. Reality check – there are really only a couple of options available for us:
 - Kids will seek out another adult’s influence and validation on their lives on their own, or
 - Parents can be a part of this process by pursuing strategic relationships for their children.
 - For the Bennett’s it looked like this . . . (introduce some of the adults we formed relationships with who have helped our children through the years)
 - For the Baltes’ is looked like this (share how God used other adults to change the course of the entire family)
5. The way that we rediscover the Hebrew principle of community is to observe what they said and did and then translate the principle into our world today.
 - We simply find ways to live it out and that means we will experience some failures along with our successes.
 - Can we bridge the gap of where we are to where we want to be?
 - A bridge is a connector, it’s a link; something that allows passage from one place to another.
 - A bridge is built to be crossed; so let’s start crossing the Principle of Community Bridge so we can rediscover the realities that await those who go across.
 - Can we as a family called Bridge of Hope commit to being a bridge that enables others to rediscover the principle of community so that they can cross over to be that connector into the lives of the next generation?

- **“RELATIONSHIP INTENTIONALITY”**

1. Parents need to be intentional in looking for and finding other adults to be spiritual leaders and mentors for their kids.
 - Build friendships with people who you trust.
 - Introduce them as early as possible to your children; let them grow up together.
 - Invite them to your home and into the life of your family.
 - Part of the beauty of being in a larger tribal unit like Bridge of Hope is there are lots of grandpa’s and grandma’s to adopt from.
2. This means that as a community, we all need to make ourselves available to parents to serve and love the next generation, to reinforce the love of God in their lives.
 - It takes our time and energy, but it is worth every moment.
 - This includes everyone, but it only happens when people are willing to be adopted.

3. This is the value of things like being part of a Family Group where you can build strong bonds of friendship that affords the trust we need for such relationships.
 - You don't entrust this to just anyone, it is about connecting and growing healthy relationships where you know each other well and support one another.
 - A small group fosters the kinds of relationships needed for widening the circle.
4. This is where the value of good children's ministry and youth ministry is so important.
 - It is a different kind of relationship from small groups, but can still be very helpful.
 - Sometimes the workers in these areas can help you in ways others can't.
 - It's why encouraging our children to be a part of this is so important.
5. One of the smartest things a parent does is to find the right kind of adult to share in the influence of their kids.
6. This is what the value of "Widening the Circle" is about.
 - It is knowing that the best way for the next generation to be impacted is for multiple adult influences to be present in every person's life, especially the next generation.
7. Reggie Joiner says, *"This is an important value for families to embrace. . . . When you widen the circle, the goal is to have other trusted adults in the lives of children before they need them so they will be there when they need them."*⁹

Conclusion: Moses passed this value on to the entire community. Why? Because they knew it would take multiple influences in a person's life to guard the faith of a generation. If you wanted the next generation to know the one true God then you need to show them multiple examples of people who know Him and love Him. Each person involved in passing to the next generation a living faith.

So how do we do this? How do we **Widen the Circle** for the next generation? This is what our take home piece is about this week. We have prepared a sheet with some questions on it to ask others and then some ideas that you might want to implement.

Here are some thoughts that might help:

- **WHO ARE THE ADULTS THAT THE CHILDREN ADMIRE ALREADY?**
- **ASK THE CHILD A QUESTION LIKE: "WHAT IS IT THAT YOU ADMIRE IN SOMEONE?"**
- **WHAT IS IT THAT YOUR CHILDREN SEE IN THEM AND ADMIRE?**
- **DO YOU HAVE GOOD FRIENDS WHO CAN PARTNER WITH YOU TO HELP PROVIDE EACH OTHER ADDITIONAL ADULT VOICES IN THE LIVES OF YOUR CHILDREN?**

If we were to ask any adult here today, "Who had the biggest influence in your life growing up?" We would find that it most likely would be an adult who supported, encouraged, and taught them. It was a mentor in their life.

YOU CAN

- **ASK GOD FOR DIRECTION, TO LEAD YOU TO PEOPLE WHO CAN BE A GOOD INFLUENCE IN THEIR LIVES.**
- **MAKE GOD FIRST IN YOUR LIFE AND BRING OTHERS INTO YOUR LIFE WHO DO THE SAME THING.**
- **CREATE OR BUILD A BRIDGE SO THAT THE NEXT GENERATION CAN FIND THEIR WAY ACROSS.**
- **TAKE THE TIME TO TEACH AND ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO REACH OUT FOR HELP FROM TRUSTED ADULTS THAT ARE A PART OF YOUR LIVES.**

⁹ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 73

Series Conclusion: As we bring this series to an end we hope that you will continue to grow in building a legacy to give to the next generation. We hope that you will think about the family values we have presented and work at growing in them. Reggie Joiner writes, *“Moses stands before the entire nation as a grandfather and leader to position the family as God’s primary conduit to tell His story of redemption and restoration. During the time of critical transition, Moses highlights values that should transcend time and culture.”*¹⁰

Let’s recap one more time the family values Moses taught us:

- **IMAGINE THE END** *in order to stay focused on the big picture . . . it is infinite love that is linked to His character*¹¹
- **FIGHT FOR THE HEART** *of their families be loving God with all their hearts . . . it is a compelling love that moves us to trust our hearts*¹²
- **MAKE IT PERSONAL** *and let kids see what God is doing in their parents . . . it is a contagious love that we demonstrate personally.*¹³
- **CREATE A RHYTHM** *so time together as a family will nurture an everyday faith it is an everyday love that is developed in the rhythm of families’ lives.*¹⁴
- **WIDEN THE CIRCLE** *and make sure kids have additional influences to guide them. . . it is an authentic love that connects us in wider circles with others.*¹⁵

Today we challenge and call you to live differently than others and build a legacy that you are pleased to give to the next generation. Rethink what is valuable and focus your energy on what is important so those who follow have a living faith in Jesus Christ to call their own.

¹⁰ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

¹¹ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

¹² Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

¹³ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

¹⁴ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74

¹⁵ Reggie Joiner, Think Orange, pg 74