

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Series: Family Life?
 Message Title: An "Out of Bounds" Family
 Speaker: Pastor Kevin Myers
 Date: October 25, 2009

Icebreaker:

Moments of parenting failure like those displayed in the youtube video near the end of the service usually aren't very funny at the time, but can make for hilarious stories (and videos) in retrospect. From playground injuries to embarrassing public tantrums, do you have a favorite family "bad parenting moment" - either from your own childhood or from your parenting experience - that you can share briefly?

Message Overview:

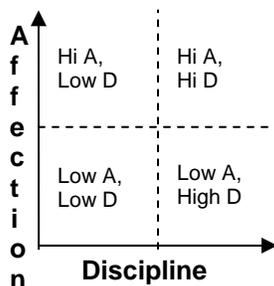
This week, we can draw insight and wisdom from a little-known period in the family life of King David. From approximately ages 30 to 37, David was king over Judah, living in Hebron. He was busy establishing his kingdom and simultaneously starting a family. His first six sons were born during this time. In a story about David's son Adonijah recorded in 1 Kings, chapter 1, we learn that *"His father had never interfered with him by asking, 'Why do you behave as you do?'"* (1 Kings 1:6). It's evident in the story of Adonijah, as well as other stories about David's first six sons (including Amnon and Absalom) that they were raised without parental discipline, producing a lack of self-discipline in them as adults. Tragically, the absence of self-discipline led to self-destruction for David's sons.

- Let's be Candid: ***The strength of Family is tied to the strength of Self-Discipline!***

David's son Solomon was born later, in Jerusalem, and grew to become an exceptionally wise and godly leader. As the writer of Proverbs, Solomon said, ***"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him."***(Proverbs 13:24)

- Let's be Courageous: ***Healthy Family Life is High Affection/High Discipline!***

Pastor Kevin (PK) explained that healthy families are built on the right balance of affection and discipline. The other quadrants in the diagram below represent three different types of parenting in dysfunctional families:



- Low Affection/Low Discipline = no responsibility, no rules; rejection
- Low Affection/High Discipline = rules without relationship; produces rebellion
- High Affection/Low Discipline = relationship without rules; produces ruin
- High Affection/High Discipline = time with heart; limits with love

Discussion:

(Leaders: Do not attempt to cover every question provided in this study guide, but rather review the complete list, selecting a mix of questions that work best for your group, mixing scripture research/discussion as well as personal application of the teaching principles.)

The strength of Family is tied to the strength of Self-Discipline.

- PK defined self-discipline as “living in bounds in an out-of-bounds world”. Think about the boundaries in your family. Not just the rules about how you expect your children to behave, but all of the boundaries – relational, moral, financial, etc. – that guide the way you “do life” and make decisions day-to-day. Are you living in bounds? Are the boundaries consistent and clearly defined so that all members of the family know where they are? Is there a particular area where you struggle to stay in bounds?
- Proverbs 13:24 tells us that a parent who withholds discipline “*hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*” PK acknowledged that parenting happens under pressure and that providing consistent, loving discipline can be difficult and exhausting. Are you ever guilty of “giving in” to your kids or letting bad behavior slide simply because it’s easier than setting limits and enforcing consequences? How can we stay motivated to “stay strong” and do the right thing as parents even when we’re tired and stressed?
- Read 1 Kings 1:5-6. As a parent, it was David’s job to interfere and provide correction when his son’s behavior was arrogant and selfish. Here, Adonijah claimed an authority that wasn’t his to promote his own selfish ambition, against the wishes of his father (who had already expressed his intentions to appoint Solomon as king). Later, his unchecked selfishness led to conflict with his brother Solomon, and eventually to his own death. What consequences have you seen manifest in the lives of adults (yourself or others) who have failed to learn self-discipline?
- Galatians 5:22-23 lists self-control as one of the fruits of the Spirit. This means that when God lives within us in the form of the Holy Spirit and we surrender our will to His, one of the character traits He forms in us is self-control. This offers hope to all of us, regardless of how well we were (or weren’t) disciplined as children. Did your parents prepare you well to be self-disciplined as an adult? Or are you more of a “work in progress” when it comes to self-control?

Healthy Family Life is High Affection/High Discipline

- Consider the four quadrants on the Affection/Discipline diagram. (Low Affection/Low Discipline; Low Affection/High Discipline; High Affection/Low Discipline; High Affection/High Discipline.) Where on the diagram would you place the parenting style you were raised with? If you’re a parent, which style do you lean toward? How has the way you were raised impacted your own views about parenting?
- One consequence of a Low Affection/High Discipline family where parents may seem distant, controlling and harsh is that children raised in this environment may come to view their Heavenly Father in the same way that they view their parents. Has your relationship with your earthly father influenced the way you relate to God? For those of us who have experienced the warmth and abundance of God’s love in a personal and relational way, how can we share that with others who may view God as distant or even angry?

- PK quoted respected Christian educator Howard Hendricks as saying, *“If you don’t play with your children you have no right to discipline your children!”* Do your children feel your intensity in affection and “play time” as much as they sense your intensity in discipline? How do you communicate to your children – in words and in actions – that they matter deeply to you?
- Read Hebrews 12:10-11. God models High Affection/High Discipline parenting when He interferes in our lives to build character and make us more like Him. Looking back at your life, are you grateful for any of the painful and difficult times God allowed you to go through? How is God’s loving discipline molding and changing your character?

Wrap-Up:

If you have access to the song “Less Like Scars” from Sara Groves’ CD *All Right Here*, you might want to play this song for your group.

As you share prayer requests, take time to talk specifically about your challenges and areas of weakness as parents. Pray for each other, that God will give us the strength, patience, wisdom and love we need to raise our children in high affection/high discipline homes. Pray, too, that God will continue to discipline each of us, that we might grow in self-control and character, becoming more like Him.

Throughout the Week: (Optional)

(Leaders: Share these optional exercises for further study and growth with your group.)

To memorize:

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11 (NIV)

This week, try to be very intentional about affection! Whether it’s taking time to play a game with a young child or going out for coffee and conversation with a teen-ager, be sure to spend some one-on-one time investing in your kids.