

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Series Title: Family Life?
Message Title: The Family Pet
Speaker: Pastor Kevin Myers
Date: October 11, 2009

Icebreaker:

Take a look at the list of biblical characters with scripture references in the Appendix. Select 2 or 3 of the names you believe some/most of your group members will be familiar, and talk about their character as we know from scripture. (Types of questions you may want to surface: Where was the character when God called them? How did their life change after God's call on their life? What was this character's greatest moment and/or personal failure? How is this character an example of God using imperfect people to accomplish His perfect will?)

Message Overview:

Pastor Kevin (PK) began the new Message Series entitled *Family Life*, by describing how he will use the Biblical character of David and his family, as a learning lab to help us recognize and tackle our own family life issues. Let's face it - David had some real family challenges. He experienced some great marking moments, but also some major setbacks.... some celebrations to remember, and...well, some moments that caused regret! And not unlike David, if we truly want to pursue great breakthroughs in our lives, it will require us taking the risk of being honest to God, by being both candid and courageous. So...

Let's be CANDID

Pretense: There is an elephant in the room and it's become the family pet!
Pretense Kills Family Life!!

Let's be COURAGEOUS

The Challenge: An elephant free family, not a problem free family
Confess Your Own Elephant!

In the upcoming weeks of this series, PK will also be tackling:

- Belonging and Belittling
- Blending Affection and Discipline
- Over-Expecting and Dissatisfaction in Marriage
- Inflict, Conflict and Re-Inflict
- Family Foolishness
- Stunting Family by Denying Dependence

Discussion:

(Leaders: Do not try 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. Please also use the information in the appendix to supplement your teaching.)

Let's be Candid: Eliminate Pretense/Pretending

- Before we get to David's story, we really need to understand what had led Israel to wanting a king in the first place. Was it God's will for Israel to have a king? God had indicated that kingship was part of His plan for Israel (Gen 49:10; Num. 24:17; Deut. 17:14-20) but the motives for Israel demanding a king were wrong. Read 1 Samuel 8 aloud. What was wrong with Israel's motives and what was God's response to them? How was Saul an answer to the kind of king Israel wanted and how did he differ from David? (1 Samuel 9-15)
- Just as Israel had wanted a king based on physical attributes, sometimes we forget that God doesn't need physically strong or attractive people to do His will- He wants men and women after His own heart. What does Paul say about how God chooses a leader in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29? How does 2 Chronicles 16:9 support this thought? How has this encouraged you when you look at your own physical attributes and question your ability to do something for the Lord?
- In 1 Samuel 13-15 we see how Saul carried on the pretense of being king and a 'godly' man, but as we see throughout history and in our own lives, God allows sin for a season but eventually says "Enough!" and exposes the sin. The tragic story of *Saul* is that he never ever fully repented of his sin; he was more concerned about his image. On the other hand, when sin was exposed in *David's* life (2 Sam. 12), how did he react differently from Saul? Would this always be true of David or would there be other times when David would bring pretense into his relationship with God and his relationship with his family? How about you?
- The pretense David brought to his family destroyed relationships and altered their history, and in the upcoming weeks, we will go into more detail about this. In your family, when you were growing up, can you see now that there was pretense that became dysfunction [i.e., the elephant] that nobody wanted to discuss? Was it ever resolved? What effect has this had on you or your siblings? How has it affected your current family life?

Let's be Courageous: An elephant free family, not a problem free family

- 'Elephants in the room' – Most of us don't really want to address them (they really stink!), but the underlying difference between a healthy functional family and a dysfunctional one, lies in the level of willingness to openly acknowledge and deal with difficult issues when they arise. What were there some healthy ways your family of origin modeled this? What were some things you remember seeing (or have seen recently) in other families that you would like to model or see modeled in your family now?
- The story PK told about his relationship with his father, and that when he ran into him at the restaurant it immediately took him back to the tensions of the elephants in their day, may have come as a bit of a shock to you. As PK noted: I doubt that in his 20's my dad ever thought

his words and actions would have led to where he is today (estranged from his kids and grandkids). Has there been a recent area in your own life where the Lord has brought to your attention that your words or actions are having a negative affect on your relationships with others? What steps might you need to take now to make a change in your life before it's suddenly 20 years down the road and it's too late?

- David needed to confess his own sins (elephant) and he also needed to call them out in his own family. Had he done this, he could have changed his family and his family's history. What if you have confessed your sin (elephant) and want to work on it, but other people in your family (adults) or in your life don't seem to want to confess their sins (elephant) or seem content in the pretense? How do you handle people content in their denial? How do Romans 14:19 and Ephesians 4:29 bring you comfort in this area?
- As parents, you are to call your children out on their sins (elephants). But there is always a right and wrong way of doing this. What Scripture has helped you over the years in this area? (Some examples: Proverbs 20:11; 22:6; Matt. 7:12; Eph. 6:4; 3 John 1:4; 1 Tim. 5:4).

Wrap-Up:

Consider reciting PK's sample confession of elephants as a group, or... take time to individually write out your own!

"I'm stinking up the house with my attitude, my behaviors, my selfishness, my narcissism, my silence, my temper, my self-absorbed ways, my belittling, my neglect of others, my unwillingness to serve in my family, my up and down ya'll need to walk on eggs around me disposition! I'm sorry. It may take me a while to grow through this. I might do this again, but I'll own it again. Grant my family patience, I will be honest, open and humble. (AND it would be most helpful if the rest of you in this family would OWN your stuff vs. just agree and pretend that I am the only one who brought an elephant in to the room!)"

Afterwards, close in prayer, asking that everyone would have the courage to confront their own sins (elephants) and patience with others until they are able to confess theirs.

Throughout the Week: (Optional)

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

Memory verse: *"For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him..."* (2 Chronicles 16:9)

Read 1 Samuel 16-18 in preparation for next week.

Appendix – Additional Information to Supplement Your Teaching:

Bible Characters with Scripture References

Adam	Gen. 1-3
Noah	Gen. 6-9
Abraham	Gen. 12-25
Lot	Gen. 14, 19
Sarah	Gen. 12, 16-18, 21
Jacob	Gen. 27-33
Joseph	Gen. 37, 39-47
Moses	Ex.-Deut.
Samson	Judges 13-16
Esther	Esther
Elijah	1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2
Jonah	Jonah
John the Baptist	John 1, 3
Mary of Bethany	John 11-12
Peter	Matt 4:18-20; 10; 14; 26; Acts 2-15
Paul	Acts 7-9, 11-28