**FAMILY DEVOTIONALS**

***The What When & How***

On June 17th of this year Benita and I will celebrate 44 years of marriage. I wouldn’t trade even one of them for all the tea in China (and I love tea, and I have loved China since 1993). I love my bride more with each passing year, just as the Lord predicted when He said, “*the two shall become one*” (Gen. 2:24). It has been 37, 35, and 32 years since the doctor placed “*the heritage from the Lord … the children of one’s youth*” into my trembling arms (Psa. 127:3-4). I then, and there, vowed I would do my best to give them back to Him as faithful children.

Do any of you relate with me to these vows of marriage and parenthood? Specifically, what are we doing to keep them? Are Benita and I truly “*heirs together of the grace of life*” (I Pet. 3:7)? Have my children “*set your minds on things above, and not on things of the earth*” (Col. 3:2)?

American history has seen our society swing with the pendulum. From the family farm, where hearth and home were the center of existence, and the Bible was “the Good Book” that all learned from, it has swung now to the urban jet-set where the family seldom eats at the same dinner table, every driver’s license comes with a car, and the family altar is sponsored by Hollywood. Whatever happened to mom, dad and the kids? Rare are the moments that we now make time for each other and for God. How many families do you know that still have family devotions consistently? Yeah, I don’t know very many either. I trust this dying art is not extinct in your home. If it is, do something about it. Now!

“*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him*” (John 4:23).

Contrary to what some may think, this scripture is not just for Sunday services. It is difficult to go through six days without worship to God and then shift into high gear on Sunday. We all need daily periods of devotion and worship. By worship I mean, as quoted by Zondervan Dictionary, pg. 899 –

“**when given to God worship involves an acknowledgment of Divine perfections. It may express itself in the form of direct address, as in adoration or thanksgiving, or in service to God; and may be private or public**.”

Is worshiping God on a daily basis the focus of your family? Are you “bonding” with your God and with your family with special moments of daily worship? Are you making memories together that your mate and your children will one day look back on when asked, “What does ***family*** mean to you?”

For those who don’t know where to begin, God outlined the What, When, and How of family devotions to ancient Israel. On the banks of the Jordan River, just as they were to enter the promised land, God instructed His people how to be happy in their new homes. Look at them carefully, and then implement them into your own family:

**THE WHAT**:
 “*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart*.”

**THE WHEN**:
“*You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up*.”

**THE HOW**:
“*You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as front-lets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates*.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

Years later the prophet Hosea cried, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*” (Hosea 4:6). Israel’s history ended sadly, and badly. What will be said of the future generations of your family?

I firmly believe that God’s ancient method of daily family worship will serve and save our modern families today.

The **What** is knowing and loving God above all else.

The **When** is anywhere and everywhere you can find or make opportunity to teach your family.

The **How** is simply the spiritual environment you create in your home by your example and sincerity.

Remember the old saying, “*The family that prays together, stays together*.” My prayer is that my family, as well as yours, will stay together, even long after the children have grown and gone.

May future memories of family become precious as we lead our loved ones in daily worship and family devotions. God be with you.

I love you. – Rick