



WEEKLY CELL GUIDE

19 SEP 2021 | CHURCH AT HOME | DEUTERONOMY 6:4-12

Series: Reset the Table | **Speaker:** Pastor Ernie Song



WELCOME

[15 MINS]

You may want to look up the following websites for icebreakers suitable for your cell.

[Ice Breakers 1](#)

[Ice Breakers 2](#)



WORSHIP

[15 MINS]

You may select songs like

1. Purify my heart
2. Jesus I come



WORD

[45 MINS]

SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

At the end of the sermon discussion, cell members will:

1. Reflect on our family's life stage and the different levels of intimacy
2. Respond by taking steps to create a thriving family life.

SERMON SUMMARY

The role of the family is like the Church's - to help every member mature in Christlikeness. We are created in God's image, and we are called to be God's image bearer to one another in our families.

SERMON RECAP

God created the institution of family. Each member of the family is created to be an image bearer of God and reflect God to one another. We are created to live in community (and not in isolation) and relate to one another. After the Fall, the function of the family included the importance of teaching its members regarding God and His ways so that we can remain in covenant with Him and will not wander from Him. Moses gave instructions to the Israelites to obey the Law, as it reveals who God is – the Jews were to live out the Law to one another.

The role of the family is to help every member mature in Christlikeness. The family plays an important role in society and it is not surprising that it is under the attack of the evil one. It is therefore critical for families to thrive.

There are 4 key elements for a family to thrive: commitment, grace, empowerment and intimacy.

Characteristics of a thriving family

1. **Commitment:** The foundation of the institution of family starts with the marriage covenant – it is an unconditional commitment and for individuals to love one another just like how Christ loves the church. God is involved in this covenant. Couples can take heart and rely on the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance to live out this covenant when there are challenges.
2. **Grace:** God designs family relationships to be lived out in an atmosphere of grace, not law. Grace means that order, regularity and being present so that family members' needs are met and our lives enhanced, not as means of repressing our needs or limiting our lives. Grace needs boundaries and rules to thrive. None of us is perfect ([Ecclesiastes 7:20 ESV](#)). Grace is about acknowledging and embracing one another's imperfections without condemnation and to love one another into wholeness.

"The family is the place where we learn how to deal with failure, where we learn about being less-than-perfect beings in a less-than perfect world. When a family pretends it is ideal, or when it believes that its members is ideal, serious problems ensue" – Dr. Henry Cloud.

Pastor Ernie also used the metaphor of how hurtful words of condemnation and judgement are like a pair of scissors that cuts off leaves of a plant (representing family life). As family life remains unattended and as emotions of hurt get more heightened, the words get sharper and more pain is felt. On the other hand, the Bible also talks about how words spoken in grace and truth can be like the pruning of a plant, helping family life to thrive.

3. **Empowerment:** The process of helping one another to recognise our own potential and spiritual gifts and reaching it through encouragement and guidance. It involves coming alongside a person to affirm his/her giftings and building his/her confidence to become all that he/she can be. Empowerment in the family allows the parent and child to thrive in external environments. Pastor Ernie also encouraged older adults to discover their spiritual giftings – it is not only for the younger generation.
4. **Intimacy:** When the family experiences covenant love, grace and empowerment, we will be able to communicate confidently and express ourselves freely without fear and wanting the best for one another. Family members need to make a concerted effort to listen, understand, accept differences and value one another's uniqueness. The best way to cultivate intimacy is through a concept of "bonding and separateness." Like how our God is near to us, it is important for family members to bond and grow with one another. Lack of bonding results in loneliness. In order for one to survive loneliness, individuals develop barriers to intimacy to soothe the pain but this prevents the problem from being resolved.

Pastor Ernie outlined the different levels of intimacy and encouraged families to strive for levels 4 or 5.

Levels of Intimacy

1. **Level 1** - Acquaintances; members report events with no opinions or emotions connected. Sports, weather, and news are permissible topics of conversation.
2. **Level 2** - Beginning of friendship; members report their opinions and thoughts about events but not their feelings.
3. **Level 3** - Friendship; members discuss their emotions about certain subjects.

4. **Level 4** - Deepening friendship; members discuss their thoughts and feelings about their struggles, fears and anxieties.
5. **Level 5** - The most intimate level of sharing; members discuss their thoughts and feelings about each other.

Pastor Ernie also shared about separateness – while God is near, He gives us enough space for us to develop.

“Bonding alone is not enough. We also need self-ownership – self-determination of what we are to do with our lives and resources”

We need stewardship over how we use our lives (Matthew 25:14-30). While parents may do things out of good intentions, taking over every decision from the child results in him/her not being able to develop his/her own identity or to build resilience from lessons of failure. Parents are encouraged to play the role of a steward and for their children to live the life God wants for them – to be mature disciples of Christ. ([Galatians 6:5](#))

Stages of Family Life

1. **Early career adults without children.** For those who are married (but without children), to build the foundations for a thriving marriage by doing life together and establishing rituals and cycles for spirituality and strengthening of marriage.
2. **Early career adults with children.** It takes a tag-team effort between parents to raise children in God’s way, to know God through the rituals of the Christian life and to pray for each other. Parents should aspire to become lighthouses for their children, shining light on the way to go, focusing on being a role model, counselling on what they can avoid and yet allowing them to have the independence to explore, make and own the decisions.

Pastor Ernie shared more about Proverbs 22:6: “Parents, if you allow your child to be “trained” in His own ways, you will reinforce his sinful inclinations to such a degree that, apart from supernatural intervention, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

For individuals who are single or come from single-parent families, Pastor Ernie encouraged these individuals to be involved in the Church community and interacting with one another.

3. **Mid-life adults with teenagers.** For parents to play more of a mentoring role to their children and allowing children to have more freedom in making choices while children continuing to be obedient. Pastor Ernie also encouraged parents to dialogue with children about having biblical worldviews ([Ephesians 6:1](#)).
4. **Aging Adults with Singles and Married Children.** For parents to be role models to and be equals with their children and for children to care for their parents as they age.

Pastor Ernie shared about the symptoms of bonding deficits:

1. Whenever all of the members of the family are at home, they spend all of their time in different rooms.
2. When the members of the family need comfort, they turn to food, drugs, work, hobbies, or other non-relational substitutes.
3. Conversations in the home centre around what a person is doing as opposed to how he/she is doing.
4. Relationships outside the home take precedence over relationships inside the home.

We all have a part and a role to play to make our families a thriving one in accordance with the season the family is in.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **A) Pastor Ernie shared about the institution of family and how we are called to be bearers of His image in our families. Share your thoughts about this. OR**
B) Pastor Ernie shared about the metaphor of how words of condemnation and judgement can affect a family. He also gave different quotes and examples. Is there anything you can relate to? Are there other metaphors that you have to describe the importance of a family that is surviving or thriving? [10 Mins]

Leader's Notes

This is a recap and relate question for members to talk more about the importance of family.

For a), leaders can invite members to think about what it means to bear God's image in their families – what are their challenges and their victories?

For b), leaders can get members to answer the question or choose to use this as an icebreaker to get members to think about metaphors they could use to describe the institution of family. Members could also choose to talk more about the concept of “bonding and separation” or the quote by Dr. Henry Cloud and how they relate to it.

Transition

God has created family as He knows that it is important for us to be in community and to relate to one another and help one another grow in Christlikeness.

2. **What is the life stage that you and your family are in? As a cell, take time to consider how your experiences with your family have shaped you, and how your family has also grown through the good times and the challenges. [10 Mins]**

Leader's Notes

This is a recap, relate and reflect question for cell members to consider which life stage they are at. Leaders may also wish to deepen the conversation using the levels of intimacy Pastor Ernie mentioned.

Levels of Intimacy

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Leaders can get members to consider the following for the discussion – What life stage is a member of the family in right now? How have their experiences growing up in their family of origin shaped them in how they relate to others now? What are the lessons learnt from their family of origin that they wish to bring to their current or future marriages and families? For members who are first generation Christians, leaders can also ask members to consider who in the family of God was an influence in their lives; in shaping how they want to relate to their own biological family or with their future families.

Transition

We are shaped by the experiences we have in our families. God, in His grace, enables us to learn precious lessons. He also enables us to be a blessing to our family members.

3. **Pastor Ernie spoke about the different characteristics that enable families to thrive. Is there any characteristic you wish to start or continue doing in your family? [10 Mins]**

Leader's Notes

This is a reflect and response question for members. Members can look at particular aspects that Pastor Ernie mentioned (commitment, grace, empowerment and intimacy) and choose one or two aspects to share on. Members can identify and share how their families are displaying these characteristics to inspire one another, or to share what they wish to start doing in their own families. Members can keep one another accountable through checking in with one another and by praying together.

Closing

God has set in place the precious institution of family for us to be nurtured, to grow and to learn deep lessons from. At the same time, we live in a fallen world and there are times where we experience hurts and pains as well. Still, as we continue to walk in Him and with one another, we can live out biblical values in our homes and play a part in being salt and light in this fallen world.



Consider dividing the group into micro-groups for a deeper time of sharing as well as praying for the following items:

1. Sermon Application

- For each individual in our families to mature as disciples of Christ.
- That each member of our families would spur one another on towards maturity in Christ.

2. COVID-19 in Singapore

- God's intervention as we experience a sharp increase in the number of community cases.
- God's hand to alleviate the sufferings, and for practical help to arise and be rendered to these suffering communities.

3. COVID-19 in the World

- A swift end to the COVID-19 crisis globally, especially in India and the rest of South Asia.
 - Healing and comfort for those who are sick and suffering.
 - Protection and guidance for healthcare professionals at the frontline, giving them wisdom, courage, and strength to confront this crisis.
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1. **Bible Reading Plan.** You can access our 2-Year Bible Reading Plan 2021-2022 by visiting <https://rlc.sg/brp2021>.
2. **Upcoming Sermon Series** – Jesus is coming back. 3 Oct – 31 Oct. In this series, we will focus on Jesus' prophecy on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24 & 25), which sheds light on the things to come. 3 Oct -The Beginning of Birth Pangs, 10 Oct - The Worst of Times, 17 Oct - The Best Ending Ever, 24 Oct - Make the Most of Every Moment, 31 Oct - The Final Separation.

3. **Missions from Home.** What does Missions look like when we're unable to travel? We believe God is calling RiverLifers to sow continually and faithfully into the nations by partnering Him and adapting in the way we approach Missions. We have 104 RiverLifers who have signed up for 9 MFH teams, reaching out to India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand. Over the next few months, they will be collaborating with our Missions Partners to develop missions projects that provide prayer support, resources and raise awareness for their ministries. We encourage all to get involved by praying, giving, or serving. Find out more about the different countries we're working with: rlc.sg/mfh. Join a MFH team: rlc.sg/mfh-serve
4. **Prayer Ministry.** If you require prayer ministry for any issues you face (eg. unforgiveness, demonic oppression, etc), you can sign up for RLC's RTF ministry: <https://bit.ly/rlcrtf>
5. **The Behold Devotional.** As part of our anniversary celebrations, we have produced a devotional in conjunction with our recently released RiverLife album, Behold. This devotional contains stories, poems and photographs written and taken by RiverLifers from different congregations and walks of life. We hope that this devotional will inspire you to greater intimacy with Him. The devotional is available for collection over the next few weeks at our in-person services. If you'd like to have a copy of this devotional, simply join us at our in-person services.
6. **Water Baptism Class.** The in-person class will be held on 9 Oct at Faith Chapel from 9AM - 3.30PM. Do note that Class capacity is limited to 15 registered participants; and a waiting list will be opened for those who register after class capacity has been reached. You may register for the class at rlc.sg/baptism-class. Registration closes on Sun, 2 Oct. For enquiries, please contact Karen Koh at karenkoh@riverlife.org.sg.

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Bank Code: 7171 / Branch Code: 029



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