

The Gospel-Driven Family

Harmony in the Home

Pastor Reggie Sanchez, Gospel Community Church

Devotion 2

I. Introduction

1. Family is for God

As we begin to break down our study of family, we will be addressing the 1 chapter of MacArthur's book, which deals with the idea of mutual submission. It is a very good chapter and I certainly commend it to you for your reading. [Ephesians 5:22-6:4](#) is going to be our main text during the series, so we will deal with each family member in the order they come up in the text. Tonight is kind of a foundational message in general about family, and beginning next week we will begin considering the biblical calling and roles of wives.

I would like to begin with what is hopefully an obvious truth to you, and that is, the declaration that our families are designed and made for God. The reason family exists is to know God, to bring glory to God, and to worship God. We were individually made for God, and when individuals who were made for God are placed into a family, you have a small community who is made for God. That being the case, if our families are not God-centered and built on him, then our families will never be what they were made to be. Just as a diesel truck cannot and will not run properly if you do not put diesel fuel in it, so also, our families cannot and will not be what God designed and created them to be if he is not what fills us and drives us in our homes.

How we spiritually build our homes is one of the most important things we will ever do in our lives. Jesus speaks of this in a very simple way in [Matthew 7:24-27](#). Notice that the one who not just hears Christ's words, but "does them," is the man who has built his house on the rock. Hearing the words of Christ in the Gospel and how we are to live in relationship with him, and then in the simplicity of faith, walking in his ways, is synonymous to having a strong and sure foundation for our homes. When Christ is believed through the Gospel, when he is obediently followed by God's grace, he becomes the very foundation of everything our lives and our homes are built on. The strength of a home is determined by its foundation, and faith in Christ and walking in obedience to him is the unshakeable foundation for every soul and home.

When Christ is the center, or foundation of your life as an individual and as a family, it does not mean that there will never be difficult times in your personal life, or in the life of your family. What it does mean is that when these overwhelming difficult times hit you and your family, the person or family that is build and founded on the rock of Jesus Christ, will be able to withstand what life throws at them (read vs. 25). Our strength in Christ is not measured by believing it equates to absence of storms. Rather, our strength in Christ in our personal lives, and in our families, is seen in how do we function in the storms? Do we turn from him, shrink back from his ways, neglect our walk with him and rush into sin? Or, do we come to Jesus in our problems, come to Jesus with our sins, bank on his love and presence with us by faith, and meet him and walk in love?

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The family that is not built on Jesus Christ, is a family that is doomed to destruction in every way, whereas the family that is built on him, will last, and grow through the storms of life, because he is our strength.

In verse 26 Jesus tells us that there is a different type of person, or family (read). This is the person, or family, that builds their life, identity, and purpose on any foundation other than Jesus. It can be built on growing a large estate, it can be built on great worldly achievements by family members, it can be built on a deep pride of who we are in our family history, traditions, and upbringing (even if it is godless), and it can be built on the false foundation of family itself. Family is not the great purpose for family! What I mean by that, is the reason our families exist, is not for the greatness of our own family. Our families exist for the purpose of knowing God, glorifying him, and worshipping him. Any foundation for a personal life or family that is anything else is a foundation of sand.

As with families built on the rock, the storms of life will come to individuals and families built on sand as well. The difference between the families is not the lack of storms, but what the family does through the storms. One family stands firmly on the foundation of Christ in the storms of life and is saved and lasts. Those of the sandy foundations, they crash, collapse, and are destroyed when the storm comes. We see it play out in this life, when family after family is gutted and ruined by trials. How many marriages end in the middle of hardships, like the death of a child? How many families are ripped apart by a family member's addiction? How many families crumble when financial crisis hits? How many families begin to destroy each other when a key family member dies and leaves behind an inheritance that they are all clamoring for? This destruction happens over and over again to families everywhere, and there is a very simple reason for it. The reason this happens is because the foundation of that family is not the solid rock of Jesus Christ, but the sandy foundation of this world.

The worst and most awful collapse of the house, the collapse I think is primarily intended in this text, is falling into God's judgment on the unconverted. For all people who build their lives on a sandy foundation, their idolatrous lives will collapse, and they will enter into eternal judgment.

As we approach the idea of family, it is important for us to realize that every single person in our families, is born a sinner, who does nothing but build sandy foundations. The first and foremost need of each family is for each family member to be personally saved by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to hear his words and put them into practice and so build on the solid rock foundation of Jesus. If you do not begin with this understanding about your family, you cannot possibly begin to build it in the proper way. Moms, dads, and children all are in desperate need of salvation, and apart from this, a person cannot fulfill his own family role in loving others. If you do not personally know the saving love of God, if you are not personally walking in him, being filled with his goodness, being confident of his love and care for you, being assured that he is with you, you will simply not be able to give to your family, the things that God asks you to give to them. But for the one who walks with God and builds his house on Christ and is secure in God's love for them, that one will love mightily in his or her family. The love and harmony and

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peace God calls us to individually give and display in our homes, only comes from us walking with God through the Gospel and demonstrating to our family members, the love that we have first received from God.

II. Gospel love and Spirit-filled: Ephesians 5

1. Gospel Love in Ephesians 5

As I mentioned earlier, our foundational passage on the family is going to be [Ephesians 5:22-6:4](#). That being the case, it is important to understand some of the build up to that text. In [Ephesians 1-3](#), in many different and wonderful ways, Paul talks about the rich identity and inheritance we have from God by virtue of being, “in Christ,” through the Gospel. These chapters are the cornerstone of the rest of the book. Beginning in [chapter 4](#), Paul then begins to make practical application of what these things are to look like in our daily lives. Chapter 4 talks about how these things are fleshed out in church. [Chapter 5](#) then touches on more practical issues and once again reminds us of the Gospel-centered foundation of spirit-filled living.

Chapter 4 ends with the exhortations to repent of theft, evil speech about one another, sinful behavior in our anger, we are called to give no opportunity to the devil who would love to destroy our Christian community, we are called not to grieve the Spirit, and part of that means keeping ourselves from corrupting talk and being kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving each other as Christ forgave us. Flowing out of these practical exhortations is [5:1-2](#).

2. Imitate God as his Beloved child vs. 1

Read verse 1. We are called to be imitators of God, as those who are now in Christ, as those who have been saved by grace through faith even though we don’t deserve it, as those who have been re-created in Christ Jesus, all because of the love of God towards us that he gave us freely. We are to be an imitator of God in the sense that we are to show others the love we have received from God. Exegetically speaking how do I know that is how we are to imitate God?

I know it from two places. First, we are clearly being called to love and forgive each other at the end of chapter 4, with the same forgiveness we have received from Christ ([verse 32](#)). Secondly, the text says that we are to imitate God as his, “beloved children.” The only way that you will ever show genuine spirit-produced love for others, is to first know how beloved you are as his child. Fathers love their children and children come to know how to love others by the model and example they see in their fathers. This is the case with us and God. The more intimate you are with how much God loves you, the various ways he expresses love to you, and the more his love fills you and thrills you, and moves you, the more you will be able to love.

You are his beloved child and the most loving parent in human history looks like a child abuser compared to God. God’s love for his children is so great that Paul had to pray for every individual and

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family to be strengthened by God to grasp it (read [3:14-19](#).) His love for you is so abundant that you need divine strength to comprehend it, and even when you begin to grasp it and enjoy it, there is still so much of it left that it surpasses what you are able to know! How connected to that love do you feel? God wants us to know it, cherish it, be shaped by it, be controlled by it, and once it has flooded who we are and thrilled us, he wants us to then know that there is still so much more of it we will never exhaust it! As his beloved child, you are called to imitate a God who loves you so much you need to pray to grasp it!

What difference would it make in every single relationship struggle you are having, if you felt connected to God's love theologically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally? Please hear this: The key to growing in your love for others, is in knowing and experiencing the love of God for you personally!

3. The Demonstration of his love: verse 2

The greatest demonstration of his love for us is seen in [verse 2](#). We are called to walk in love, and the love of God that we are to walk into is the love Christ showed us when he gave himself up for us. When Jesus went to the cross he went personally there for you. He gave himself up personally for you. His love was sacrificial, it was submissive, it was for the glory of God, it was costly, and it was for the good of others who did not deserve it. This is the love we are being called to walk in. It is the love that made you a child of God, it is the love with which you were not just loved with at your salvation, but what you are also loved with every day of your life as a believer and will continue to be loved with for all eternity. This is the love we are to show others, including those in our families.

4. The Rest of chapter 5

In light of this call to love as a beloved child, the rest of the chapter weaves together exhortations of that which we are to pursue and that which we are to forsake. The next thing that comes in the chapter is a command to avoid sexual immorality and covetousness, both of which are expressions of self-interest at the expense of others and is an example of walking in darkness, like the world. Paul commands us to walk in the light because we are children of the light and, according to verses 9-10, walking in the light is characterized by living into that which is good, right, true, and is pleasing to God. The light of our lives will expose the darkness of that which does not please the Lord.

In verse 15 and following, we are called to carefully consider how we walk and to make the best of the time because the days are so filled with evil. We are to walk in the will of God, which includes not walking in drunkenness, and instead being filled with the Spirit. When I taught through this several years ago, I wondered why Paul contrasts being filled with the Spirit with drunkenness. I believe he is comparing two different things that can fill someone and control a person's behavior. When we are intoxicated we are filled with wine and are being controlled by a substance that is going to promote sinful actions within us. On the other hand, when we are filled with the Spirit, he is going to produce the very fruits in us that Ephesians 5 is calling for. We are all empty and will fill our emptiness with

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something, and instead of filling it with that which will control our minds and lead us into sin, we are to be filled with God's Spirit that will produce love in us.

Finally, this section comes to an end with a call for the Christian community to be a celebratory community ([verses 19-20](#))! We are told to address each other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as we sing and make melody to Christ in our hearts and give thanks to him! Clearly Paul has told us to take great caution in our walks, to flee sin, and to pursue holiness, as we imitate God as his beloved children. However, in the middle of this intense war, we are also called to have a celebratory spirit! We are to be full of songs of victory in Jesus, that even though we have difficulties now, we know he is with us, we are his beloved children, and we are going to sing about it! That is a joyful people!

5. Submitting to Each other vs. 21

It is in this type of loving environment that Paul calls us to submit "*...to one another out of reverence for Christ.*" This is a call to have a joyful willingness to yield to your brother or sister in order to serve them, for the purpose of facilitating an atmosphere of harmony and love. We do not mutually submit to each other's desires to sin and indulge worldliness, we must resist those things and by our light expose those dark things ([verses 12-14](#)). The idea of mutual submission here is to willingly and joyfully have a spirit of glad deference to the preferences of another to be a blessing to them. We should be eager to consider another, embrace their words or desires when it is appropriate and honoring to God to do so, and in doing this we show them they are valued, respected, listened to, and loved. This kind of living makes a harmonious, peaceful, and loving environment for the people who are present. After all that Paul has said in chapter 5, as transitions from this call to mutual submission in verse 21, he will begin verse 22, by fleshing out how these things are played out in family. This kind of holy, joyful, harmonious, peaceful, environment that gladly yields to the other person's holy preferences and desires, produces the loving spirit and atmosphere, in which every family member's particular roles are to be carried out.

III. Trinitarian Peace, Love, and Harmony

1. The Peace, Harmony, and Love of the Trinity

At this point, I would like to draw our attention to the fact that this type of blessed, peaceful and harmonious community exists in God himself within the Trinity. This is one of my personal favorite truths in all the Scriptures, because I have never encountered God in a more powerful way in my entire life, than when I have been studying and meditating upon the Trinity. We were made for the purpose of living in a loving, peaceful, harmonious, unified, intimate, and joyful community and the only place right now where that is perfectly lived out is in God himself.

We know from the Scriptures that our Trinitarian God, is a God of peace and harmony, or order, because 1 Cor. 14:33 tells us that, "*For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.*" (See also [Philippians 4:7.](#)) We know that God is perfectly joyful and infinitely satisfied in this relationship because Jesus himself

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speaks of being a God of joy, *“But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves,”* (John 17:13). We also know that God is love, *“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”* (1 Jn. 4:8). What characterizes the Trinity is that the very essence of what it means to be God is to be a God of peace, harmony, order, joy, and love in community with himself. And, if God himself is a community, then we can reasonably expect to find these virtues existing in the Divine Trinitarian relationships, because these virtues are part of the essence of the divine being. In other words, who God is, is going to be manifested in his inter-Trinitarian relationships. His actions will always be consistent with his divine nature.

[John 17](#) is an absolute Gold mine filled with the precious jewels of revealing what the Trinitarian relationships are like. We know within the Trinity that God, even before creation existed, was in a perfect community relationship within himself through the love and glory that was shared within the Trinity. John 17:5 confirms this, *“And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”* (See also [John 1:1-2](#).) This sharing of glory existed in God himself and was experienced within the Trinity before the world was even made. Furthermore, in Jn. 17:24 Jesus said, *“Father I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”* There is a lot there, but for now I just want to draw attention to the fact that Jesus is speaking of divine love that was shared within the Trinity prior to the foundation of the world, which tells us that the Trinitarian sharing of glory, love for each other, and co-existence in all peace, joy, and harmony is an eternal reality that has always existed in God!

2. God’s Glory: The Treasure of the Trinity

One of the most powerful things that unites any community is having a common goal, and to have each person within that community, give themselves fully, in their own unique way, to the achievement of that goal. The Trinity, like all communities, has a goal and each person of the Trinity makes its own unique contribution to the achievement of that goal. What do you think that goal is? I believe that it is without question, the glorification of the Godhead. Romans 11:36 says, *“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”* I think that verse pretty much sums it up. Everything is from God, through God, and for God and as a result he will be glorified forever. If you do a search of the Scriptures you will find God doing things for his glory, or for his namesake, absolutely everywhere in the Bible. The Bible is so replete with this theme it is overwhelming. For the sake of time I have highlighted this verse to make my point, but I could have done so from many texts. So, what I want you to see is that the goal of Trinity is the glorification of God. Now what I would like to move onto, is a consideration of how the Father’s glory is achieved by the Trinity, in seeing this, it is glorious and wonderful because we see the love, humility, and appreciation, of each member of the Trinity towards each other, in the achievement of God’s glory.

3. How the Father is Glorified

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We could examine many Scriptures, but to keep it simple, I would like to just stick to John 17 in considering how the Father is glorified (read vs. 1). Jesus prays for his own glorification, because it is in the glorification of the Son, that the Father is glorified. God the Father does not glorify himself apart from the son, *“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father, whoever does not honor the son does not honor the Father who sent him,”* (Jn. 5:22-24). All honor to the Father happens exclusively in and through the Son, and all dishonor to the Son is a direct dishonoring of the Father.

What I want you to see here is that when the Father seeks to glorify himself, he doesn’t do it by trampling on Jesus, and ignoring the Holy Spirit (more on the Spirit in a moment). Rather, the way that the Father has chosen to be glorified is by glorifying the Son! That is what Jesus prayed in verse 1 when he asked the Father to glorify Christ, so that Christ could glorify the Father. This is such a wonderful truth and it is so important for understanding God’s love within the Trinity, and later, how that applies to us in our families!

With human beings, if we want glory, we tend to pursue it at the expense of others, we destroy others, we undermine others, we put them down, we harm them with our words, and in extreme cases, we even murder them. But when the Father seeks his glory, he brings the Son into that and puts the Son, someone else, on the center stage for all to see! He does this, because in love, when the Father seeks his own glory, he isn’t doing it by slighting Jesus, rather, he is honoring and exalting Jesus, in the Father’s own self-glorification! That is so awesome!

What does the Son do? When he is glorified, he doesn’t just hog the spotlight. Instead, the reason Jesus asks for the Father to glorify him, is so that he can turn right back around and glorify the Father! I love this so much! Jesus even said at the end of his life, *“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”* He didn’t draw attention to the beholding of himself at the exclusion of the Father, rather, he tells the disciples that all of the beauty and splendor and majesty and glory that you see in me is a reflection of my Father! Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God ([Col. 1:15](#); [2 Cor. 4:4](#)). You cannot see the glory of the Father, without beholding the glory of the Son, and all beholding of the glory of the Son, is a perfect glorification of the Father! The Father and Son are so other-centered in being glorified! The Father puts the Son on display to glorify himself, and when the Son is on display he points to the Father! This is such a humble, loving, joyful, and harmonious relationship that consistently yields to the other!

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4. The Holy Spirit

So what about the Holy Spirit? Where does he fit in the picture? It is reasonable to expect that he will carry himself in the exact same manner as the Father and the Son. Near the end of his life Jesus promised that the Spirit would come after his departure (John 14:15-17; 25-26). What is going to happen when the Spirit comes? Is the Spirit going to show up and say, “Hey, it is time for you guys to stop looking at the Son and the Father so much! You need to give me more attention!?” Jesus tells us in Jn. 16:13 that the Spirit is under the Father’s authority and he will not even speak on his own! He, like the Son, is under the Father’s authority, and he is so in tune with the glorification of the Father through the Son, that not even the Holy Spirit, will speak on his own, but only as he hears from the Father. Furthermore, in verse 14 we see that specifically the role of the Spirit will be to glorify the Son, by “speaking” things that will cause God’s people to know the Son!

So the Spirit, like the Father and the Son, when he comes onto the stage, he draws attention to another member of the Trinity, namely, the Son! The Spirit is not bantering with the Father about how Jesus gets too much attention and the Spirit needs more of acclaim. Similarly, when Jesus prophesied that the Spirit will come on the scene in fuller measure, he doesn’t slight the Spirit to the disciples out of jealousy so that they will not honor the Spirit. In fact, he does the opposite: *“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”* (Jn. 16:7). Do you hear that? Jesus is not competitive with the Spirit and trying to undermine him, rather, he is so appreciative of the ministry of the Spirit, it is of such value and worth in the mind of Christ, that he actually tells the disciples that the physical absence of Christ is better for them because they can possess the Spirit when this happens! So the Spirit glorifies Christ, and then Jesus himself also turns around ascribes great honor to the Spirit!

There is no sibling rivalry here! We also don’t see the Father and Son teaming up to create and redeem the world, but making the Spirit stay in his room! Rather, all three join together and out of the overflow of the peace, love, harmony, joy, and unity that they enjoy, they all have their unique roles in the creation and redemption of the world! The Father isn’t sinfully selfish and demanding that the Spirit and Son become his slaves to gratify his sin nature (he doesn’t have a sin nature). Rather, he lovingly uses authority to glorify himself in a way that results in the highest honor, exaltation, and glorification of his Son, and it takes place by the essential work done by the Spirit. The Son deflects glory back to the Father, and he gives due honor to the Spirit, and the Spirit glorifies Christ!

There is never an argument in the Trinity. There is no neglect or distance in the relationship. Not one time has Jesus ever said or thought, “I wish I knew my Dad.” In fact, the opposite is true, Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.”* (Jn. 5:19-20). Furthermore, the Spirit fully knows God to because in [1 Cor. 2:10-11](#) Paul said that the Spirit searches the deep things of God and that he even fully knows the

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mind of God! God fully knows God, and God is fully known by God in the Trinity! There is no distance, there is complete openness, oneness, closeness, and joyful love in God's Trinitarian relationships!

There is no sinful selfishness, there is no slander, there is no jealousy, there is no betrayal, there is no competitiveness, there is no violence, there is no abusive words or actions, there is no humiliating the others in public, and this has never happened in all eternity. In fact, there has never been even one fearful thought among any member of the Trinity that any of these things might occur! Each person of the Trinity fully enjoys the intimacy, blessedness, privilege, and oneness of being part of this community, and each member thrives on the fullness, love, security, peace, and joy of the Godhead! What a family! If you want to see your family live into this, you must first know where it comes from. This type of harmony and love only comes from the community that is God, namely, the Trinity!

IV. Trinitarian Peace, Love, Harmony, and Joy for Families: Enter Through the Gospel

1. The Good News

In my mind, the most glorious news about our salvation, is that we are saved into this Trinitarian love, unity, peace, and joy! Look at [verses 20-21](#). We are actually going to share in Trinitarian unity, oneness, and glory. How blessed is it going to be to have no friction, fear of rejection, hatred, animosity, jealousy, aloofness, bitterness, lack of relational closeness, or hostility towards God or anyone else?. Can you even imagine that? That is what we are saved into! We will enjoy that unity not only with God himself, but also, with each other!

Now I want you to also see the literally infinite intimacy and love we will share in glory (read [verse 23](#)). What a verse! Christ is in us, the Father is in the Son, and we become, "perfectly one," in this spiritual union with God! Furthermore, not only are we perfectly one, but also I want you to see how much we are loved by the Father, "*...and have loved them even as you loved me.*" How much does the Father love Jesus? That is the same manner in which he loves all who are in him. Isn't that amazing? Jesus even reiterates this in verse 26, "*I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*" There it is again, Jesus is in us, and the love the Father has for Christ is the same love he has for us! Going a step further, Jesus vows to continue to make God known to us, which makes perfect sense because back in [17:3](#) he said that the very essence and reality of eternal life is to know the Father and the Son in relational intimacy!

It is literally impossible to put into words how wonderful this is! Why does the doctrine of the Trinity matter? Because the love, oneness, unity, joy, peace, harmony, and blessedness that we crave to experience with God and others, is an infinitely powerful and glorious reality within the Trinity himself, and our Trinitarian God has granted, as the most wonderful part of our salvation, our participation in his own communal love and blessedness! It literally gets no better than that!

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2. Our Families

In our families, all of us long for this to be a reality in our homes. All of us have different roles in the family. All of us should have the same family goal that exists within the Trinity, namely, the glorification of God. As each one of us seeks to live into this, we must come to Christ in saving faith. He died for all of our sins, even the ones we have committed in our families. He died for every evil thing that has happened in our homes that is a direct contradiction of what exists in the Trinity. By the cross he offers salvation, forgiveness, and his fellowship by bringing us into this intimate relationship with God.

As we take our cues from the Trinity, we must labor, through the Gospel and in dependence upon God's grace, to foster the same loving, humble, and peaceful environment in our homes, that exists in the Trinity. Just as each member of the Trinity exalts the other member, so also we are to submit to one another, show honor to one another, and build one another up in our homes, I believe that is what Paul has in mind in [Eph. 5:21](#) when he tells us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

He doesn't mean everyone in the family is the authority and we all have to obey each other. That would undo everything he will say about family roles wherein he clearly establishes positions of authority and submission in the following verses. Rather, I believe the idea behind verse 21 is that just as each member of the Trinity has a key role to play in the glorification of God that is honored and appreciated by each member of the Trinity, so also we are to know what each person's role in the family is to be, and we must appreciate it, honor it, respect it, rejoice in it, and exhort each other to fulfill our roles well. And, just as the Trinity takes pleasure in the exaltation and honor shown to the other members of the Godhead, so also we are to lead our families into a lifestyle of taking pleasure in honoring the other family members. When we are honored as individual family members, we are to, like the Trinity, express our gratitude and thankfulness for the other family members and honor them while we are being honored.

In addition to this, just as each member of the Trinity is intimate with the others, we must foster an environment in our homes that invites all of the family members into one another's lives in an intimate, personal, and loving way. It should never be said of a Christian parent, that the children don't know you, or that the spouses feel like they do not know each other, because that is the antithesis of Trinitarian life and love!

How different would your family be if you had the same goal, and understanding and appreciation of each other's different roles? What would it be like in your home if jealousy, envy, and rivalry gave way to outdoing each other in showing honor? What impact would it make on your household if the use and practice of authority and submission took place with love? We are called to foster this type of environment in our homes, and when it fails, we are to lovingly and authoritatively and patiently apply the Gospel to those failures, repent, forgive, reconcile, and press into God that this loving community might increase in Trinitarian blessedness! This is the Spirit with which we are to fulfill our given roles in our families.