

Family

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Introduction

This past week, my son married his lovely bride. Beth and I not only rejoiced in his passage into adulthood, but also rejoiced as we welcomed a new member to our little family.

Watching the event, of course, made my mind travel along family paths. That journey was hastened by the pastor's message, which also dealt with family. I want to steal some of his thoughts, this morning, and have a little discussion about the importance of family, and what family means to the Christian.

Let's begin with a few discussion starters:

QUESTION - What is family?

QUESTION - What place should family have in your life as a believer in Christ?

QUESTION - Is there a difference between family and church? Explain your reasoning?

Let's use a simple acronym to guide our discussion today, and then I would like to make 3 simple points about family.

Note: On the whiteboard, write the acronym FAMILY. Write it vertically, so that the individual words Forget About Me I Love You can be added. Before adding the words, though, give the class an opportunity to fill in the blanks of the acronym. Ask, "How would you fill in the blanks for this acronym?"

Forget about me, I love you. Allow me to make 3 points from Scripture which demonstrate the truth contained in this acronym.

My family comes first - over my own desires and ambitions.

READ - *1 Timothy 5:8*.

DISCUSSION - Here we have an admonition. In its most literal interpretation, it deals with how a family should take care of its own widows. Does it, though, teach the pre-eminence of family in general? If so, how?

READ - *Philippians 2:3-8*

DISCUSSION - Here we have Christ's supreme example of selflessness. Does it apply to our family relationships? How?

My main job is to love my family.

DISCUSSION - What does that mean?

READ - *1 Corinthians 13:1-8a*

Note the following explanations of some of the terms Paul used to describe love:

Love suffereth long

Love is patient, and puts up with the idiosyncracies and frailties of the partner.

Forget about me (no matter what you've done, or how you've disappointed me...)

Love is kind

No explanation needed. You know what it means to be kind. Be kind to your spouse - to your family members.

ILLUS - One of my college professors led a discussion one day about dealing with difficult people in the church. After many suggestions and anecdotes had been shared by all in the class, he summed it up by saying that no matter what the situation you were dealing with, one primary solution was to "always be kind." And if you will apply that to whatever conflict or issue arises in your family, you will find it works.

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Forget about me, I love you (and will try with all my might to demonstrate that love by always being kind.)

Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up

The one who loves does not brag about him/herself. He/she recognizes it's not about me, but about you. Forget about ME, I love YOU.

Love doth not behave itself unseemly.

The one who loves does not act in an unbecoming manner. He / she always treats the one they love with respect and dignity.

ILLUS - Isn't it interesting how many people treat their co-workers with respect, but then come home and treat their family with something less than respect?

Forget about ME, I love YOU, and will always give you the dignity and respect I owe you.

Love seeketh not her own.

Again, no explanation is needed. This means what it says. The one who loves is not selfish, and does not seek his / her own way. FORGET ABOUT ME!!!

Love is not easily provoked.

The one who loves is not touchy, not offended or set off by every little issue that arises in marriage.

ILLUS - Beth and I watched a movie last night entitled "The Prize Winner from Defiance Ohio." I recommend it for a couple of reasons. First, it is a completely clean and entertaining movie. Second, the main character in the movie is a wife who demonstrates in many ways the truths in our lesson today. She had a problem husband, but demonstrated patience with his issues. She was not easily provoked.

What bothers you about your family relationships? What are the things that family members do that really bug you? If you look at them objectively, just how important are they, really? How many of them are just petty? How many of them would you put up with in a professional colleague, and just laugh off because of their pettiness? Yet in families, for some reason, we let such little things get to us. But love is not easily provoked.

Forget about me, I love you.

Love thinketh no evil.

The one who loves keeps no record of the wrongs committed against him / her. Your family will hurt you sometimes. Forget about it. Don't write it down. Let it pass.

Forget about me, I love you. And when you hurt me, I'll forget about that, and just keep loving you.

Love rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth.

The one who loves is happiest when his / her family is serving God, rather than serving the world. He / she understands the difference.

Love beareth all things.

A preacher friend described this as "bearing like a roof - protecting those inside from all that would fall upon them and harm them."

Forget about me, I love you, and will protect you always.

Love believeth all things.

The one who loves trusts, always. The one who loves believes in those he / she loves, always.

Forget about me, I love you, and will always believe in you. Even when you disappoint me, I will believe in you. No matter what the rest of the world thinks of you, I will always believe in you.

Love hopeth all things.

The one who loves expects the best, is optimistic always in the relationship.

It is amazing how quickly some people give up on a relationship. The older I get the more I think that is a terrible mistake. No matter how bad things look today, they can (and often do) get better tomorrow.

Forget about me, I love you, and will stick with you and believe that the best is yet to come.

Love endureth all things.

Again, I am reminded of something I heard a preacher friend say in explaining this phrase. He said this could be viewed in military terms. The idea is "to bear up under, to hold a military position at all costs, to never give up an inch of ground."

All kinds of ideas are seen there - fighting against those who would undermine the relationship, standing firm no matter how bleak things look, never giving up, never raising the white flag.

ILLUS - Charlton Heston used to lead the National Rifle Association, an organization which strives mightily to protect the rights of American citizens to keep and bear arms, as promised in our constitution. He used to stand before meetings of the organization and hold a rifle high over his head and say, "They can have this gun when they pry it from my cold dead hands."

Do you have that level of commitment to your family? You should.

Forget about me, I love you, and will stay by your side forever!

God will reward such commitment to family.

READ - *Colossians 3:17-25*

Notice especially *vss. 23-24*.

Whatsoever ye do

This is the WHAT. It includes those things specifically mentioned in the preceding list (husbands love your wives, wives submit to your husbands, servants obey your masters), and everything else too!

Forget about me, I love you. And I will demonstrate it in EVERYTHING I do.

Do it heartily

This is the HOW. Heartily literally means "out of the soul."

Forget about me, I love you, and will make it the very highest priority in my life. I will love and serve you from the very depths of my soul.

As to the Lord

This is the WHO. We serve and love one another in our family relationships, but ultimately, such service and love is directed toward our Lord.

If we love our wives, men, we are demonstrating love for Christ. If we treat them poorly, we are treating Him poorly. The same is true for you wives. If you live lives of quiet loving submission to your husbands, ladies, you are demonstrating love for Christ.

Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. (Matthew 25:40,45)

Forget about me, I love you, and will demonstrate my love for Christ by so loving and honoring you.

Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward.

Here is the key point from this passage. No matter what you go through in family relationships, living the little phrase "Forget about me, I love you" will always be rewarded, because the reward comes from Christ, not from mankind. He is ever faithful, and will always reward your efforts to serve Him.

PARENTHESIS - If the church is family....

We asked in the introduction if there was a difference between family and church. Some verses to help you answer that question might include *Matthew 12:46-50* (where Christ said those who served Him were His family - we are all family in Christ), *Ephesians 2:19*; *Romans 8:16* (both of which describe the church as a family, we are all children of God, we are all part of His family.)

Think about this this week. If the church is a family, then everything we just learned about "Forget about me, I love you" applies to our church family as well.

Conclusion

Forget about me, I love you.

Husbands, is that the attitude of your heart toward your wife, and toward your children? Do they truly, in every way, take precedence over your own ambitions, desires, plans, and activities? If not, will you covenant with God to make it so?

Forget about me, I love you.

Wives, is that the attitude of your heart toward your husband, and toward your children? Do they truly, in every way, take precedence over your own ambitions, desires, plans, and activities? If not, will you covenant with God to make it so?

Forget about me, I love you.

And what of our church family? Do we apply this same selflessness to them? I fear this one speaks to us all. I know it speaks to me.

Forget about me, I love you - that is the definition of family.

Family