

The Skill to Build
Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC – 6-1-25

We're in a sermon series entitled Kingdom Family. Kingdom families seek the kingdom of God first and they base their family on the purposes and principles of God's word.

Because of that, strong families are committed to each other. They understand they are in a covenant with God and each other. Strong families have a culture of honor, kindness and blessing. Strong families pray for one another, protect one another, and have faith for one another.

No matter how strong your family is, it can be even stronger. We want to help you build a stronger family.

So today I'm preaching on The Skill to Build. I'm going to teach you 3 skills you need to build a stronger family.

Before I talk about those – I want to remind you that strong families do what it takes to make it work! Strong families do family God's way. They base their family on the truth of God's word. Strong families know the truth of Psalm 127:1

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.

Commentators agree that the word "house" may refer either to an ordinary dwelling; to a place of worship; or to a family.

Adam Clarke's Commentary points out the fact that in the Hebrew – the language of the Old Testament – the word for son and the word for daughter both come from the same root word banah – which means to build.

Vine's Dictionary says that just as stones and wood are used to build a building, so sons and daughters build up a family. The point of the verse is that without God's help and God's blessing – we cannot build a church, a home, or a family. Proverbs 14:1 says:

The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.

This truth is not just for women – wise men and women build their families – foolish men and women tear their own families down.

When you see a family fall apart – there's been some foolishness on somebody's part. Somebody foolishly chose not to do things God's way. They foolishly chose to cheat on their spouse or abuse their spouse or neglect their spouse. As a result, they tore their own house down!

Proverbs 24:3-4 tells us how to build our homes-

Through skillful and godly wisdom is a house (a life, a home, a family) built, and by understanding it is established [on a sound and good foundation], And by knowledge shall its chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

To build stronger families – we need God’s wisdom and God’s help. We need skills to build. The first skill I’m preaching on is:

1- CONNECTION

There’s nothing sadder than families where everyone is lonely. Some couples are more like roommates living separate lives sharing only a house rather than being intimate lovers sharing everything. A Christian marriage should not be a loveless marriage!

The enemy works overtime trying to separate us. That’s why we need to work on our connections. That’s why we need to fight against any thing, any pursuit or any person – including any so-called friend – who try to disconnect us from our family.

Connection is about:

Being together (this means time – quantity and quality)

Being there for each other

Families that stay together Pray together / Play together

Would you describe your family life as fun?

When’s the last time you had fun together?

When’s the last time you played some games?

Some of you need to lighten up! You take everything too seriously.

Nobody wants to be around someone like that!

Having fun makes your family want to be together.

Fun creates memories that bond your family together.

Get connected by finding things you like to do together. My wife and I like to go to movies together, out to eat together, travel together, learn together. We work at entering into each other’s worlds. So take steps to get connected and stay connected!

This brings us to the second skill needed to build stronger families:

2- COMMUNICATION

Communication originated with God. God is a speaking God. He spoke the world into existence. He could have thought the world into existence. But 10 times in

the first chapter of Genesis, the Bible says that "God said."

We are created in God's image. We were created to communicate. The problem is that when sin entered the picture, it caused a breakdown in communication. Experts say that 87% of most relationship problems are because of inability to communicate. This stands to reason since communication is the bridge for relationships.

With communication we come to know and understand each other.
With communication we can work through any other problems.

Without communication problems are not resolved – in fact they become worse! That's why we need to learn the skill of communication. James 1:19-20 says:

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Someone said that God gave you two ears and one mouth so you can listen twice as much as you talk. As you talk, remember the goal is not to get your point across. Your goal is mutual understanding.

Communication is a process of sharing thoughts and feelings with someone in such a way that they understand you and you understand them.

Think of it like this – in the early days of email, you could hit send only or receive only or send and receive. Some people are always in send mode. They are always talking. They never drop a comma. They are always sending messages. But they never want to receive anything back.

The opposite extreme is those who are always in receive mode. They receive and receive – but never answer – never respond – never send anything back. This is extremely frustrating. It's like playing tennis with someone who never hits the ball back over the net. You just serve and chase the ball – serve and chase the ball. They never return the serve.

In communication – you want someone to return the serve. The best way to communicate is to be in send AND receive. In that mode you send messages and you receive messages. It's 2-way.

The goal of communication is not talking or listening.
The goal of communication is not to get your point across.
The goal of communication is mutual understanding!

We often think we understand what someone is saying, but often what we heard is not what they mean at all.

It's one thing to hear someone's voice; it's another thing to understand the meaning of what they said.

Take communicating with my wife for example. There have been many times when my wife and I have had conversations where she will say, "You're not hearing me." My response is always, "Yes I am; here's what you said." And I repeat to her exactly what I heard.

But she will say, "That's what I said, but that's not what I meant." And I will say, "But that's what you said." But she will say, "Well, you heard me wrong." That goes all over me and makes me want to quit trying. But God said in His word that husbands must live with their wives in an understanding way. And if God said it – it must be possible!

So, I've had to learn that the issue is more than the words she says – it's understanding her heart in the matter. I'm responding with my head to something that came out of her heart. And it's not until we become concerned about the other person's heart - their feelings interests, and ideas - and not just our own, that we begin making strides towards understanding each other.

Listening communicates caring and respect.

Listening shows that we are willing to learn from the other person.

It's so easy to miscommunicate. If you've ever been to Europe you've seen signs everywhere that say WC. Anyone know what WC stands for? WC stands for water closet, which is what they call restrooms over there.

Well, there was a very proper English lady who was traveling to the US to attend a Christian conference at a Christian campground. The word campground kind of made her concerned about the restroom facilities. She envisioned a primitive, rustic camp with no facilities. So, she wrote the camp director to see if they had a WC.

Well – the camp director had never been to Europe and had never heard of a WC. He wracked his brain and since the camp was Methodist, he thought that WC must stand for a Wesleyan Church since John Wesley started the Methodist Church.

So, the camp director responded to the lady with this letter. You can imagine the ladies' confusion when she read the letter. Remember – she's asking about a Water Closet – a restroom – His communication is about a Wesleyan Church.

Dear Madam,

I take great pleasure in informing you that indeed we do have a WC.

It is located only 5 miles from the camp in the middle of a beautiful grove of trees. This WC is capable of holding 250 people at a time and there is standing room for 100 more. As there are many people expected in the summer months, I suggest

you arrive early. In fact, sometimes it is so busy, we actually have people standing outside the open doors peering inside to observe the various proceedings inside! The WC only opens only on Wednesdays and Sundays. I hope this will not inconvenience you if you are in the habit of going more regularly.

On the other hand, I'm sure you will be pleased to know that many people even bring their lunch with them and make a day of it, while others who cannot spare so much time often arrive by car just in time. I would highly recommend that you visit the WC on Sundays, as there is always an organ accompaniment. The acoustics are excellent and even the most delicate sounds can be heard everywhere.

It may be of some interest to you that my daughter met her husband at the WC and was actually married in the WC. I remember the day quite well, because there was a rush for seats and there were 12 people sitting where only 10 would usually sit, and it was wonderful to see the expressions of happiness on their faces.

My wife, sadly, has been ill and unable to go as regularly as she would like. It has been almost a year since she went, which pains her greatly. As we grow older, it seems to take more of an effort to go, particularly in cold weather. By the way, we are holding a fund-raiser to buy plush seats, since many feel the seats are somewhat hard and uncomfortable.

When you arrive, I look forward to escorting you to the WC myself and seating you in a place where you can be seen by all.

With Deepest Regards,
The Camp Director

What we have here is a failure to communicate. Many of us live our lives on that level of miscommunication and misunderstanding and it's not so funny in real life. Instead of assuming we know what other people mean by what they say, we need to work hard on understanding each other.

This is a paradox – but the way we can all be better communicators is by becoming better listeners. This skill is developed by being quick to hear and slow to speak! Proverbs 29:20 says:

Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

I'm encouraging you to listen more than you talk. Work on seeking first to understand, When you do speak, speak the truth in love. Do this and you will be on your way to becoming a great communicator.

This brings us to the third skill needed to build stronger families:

3- CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Many people think that strong families never have conflicts. Wrong! They do. Conflicts are part of every relationship. What is important is how you deal with those conflicts.

Don't think it's strange when you have conflicts. Webster's defines conflict as "a disagreement in ideas or interests." Two people raised in different homes by different families will see some things differently. They will have different opinions, ideas and interests. That's OK. The key is learning how to resolve the differences.

Some people are in one extreme or the other regarding conflicts – either they always totally avoid them or they always cause them. Neither of these is productive.

Some people make an issue out of everything. To them I say – Lighten up! On the other hand, some people never confront anything. To them I say – toughen up!

The conflict avoider can seem more mature or more spiritual. What do I mean by avoiding confrontation and conflict? I mean avoiding talking about uncomfortable things. Sweeping things under the carpet. Pretending things are OK when they're not. Not addressing difficult situations that need addressing.

Most of us do not like confrontation but scripture clearly supports it. Proverbs 27:5-6 says"

Open rebuke is better than hidden love! Wounds from a friend are better than kisses from an enemy!

This does not mean we go around confronting everyone all the time. We certainly should not be looking for fights. 2 Timothy 2:23-24 says:

Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

The key to conflict resolution is learning to fight fair.

Rules for fair fighting:

- Deal with 1 issue at a time, rather than everything you can think of
- Don't bring up past history
- No low blows - don't make it personal –
- Focus on the problem, not the person

- Focus more on yourself than your spouse-
- Give up trying to change spouse / control behavior
- Don't be abusive – verbally, physically
- Use “I” statements rather than “YOU” statements
- Avoid absolutes - Don't use words like “Always” or “Never”
- Call a time out if it gets too heated – (don't forget to resolve later)

The number one rule is this – Don't try to win! If one wins, both lose. The best resolution is win/win. The key is this – do whatever it takes to work things out. Romans 12:18 says:

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

God has given us wisdom in His word to develop skills to build our families. And He will hold you accountable for doing all you can to live in peace. Wise men and women build their families up rather than tear them down!

The main blockage to connection and communication and godly confrontation has the same root as many other problems—selfishness! In Luke 9:23-24 Jesus said-

If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it.

Many people wonder how to do this – I'm here to tell you that families are one of the main places we take up our cross and die to ourselves. That makes family one of God's best tools to make you like Christ!

It takes dying to self to stay connected because it means you must do some things that others enjoy – not just the things you enjoy!

It takes dying to self to communicate in a way that fosters mutual understanding.

It takes dying to self to become as concerned about what the other person has to say as you are about what you have to say.

It takes dying to self to work through conflicts in a godly way!

It takes dying to self to admit you are wrong.

It takes dying to self to forgive when someone has wronged you!

It takes dying to self to get up with a sick child and let your spouse sleep!

It takes dying to self to meet someone else's needs when they aren't meeting your needs! But when you do these things – you have God's promise that life will come out of that death! Do family God's way and He will build your house!

Do family God's way and you will have a strong family!