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Pentecost Acts 2:17-18

Is Christ At The Center of Your Family?

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*“Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me ...”*

If that actually happened, right now... if the Spirit of God were to fall fresh on you, right here ... what would happen? What would he do to you? If God’s Holy Spirit suddenly poured out on you today, do you know what impact he would make on your life?

I don’t know if I can answer all of those questions; but one thing I do know is this. The Spirit of our God wants to make a strong impact upon your family. Maybe you caught it earlier, right there in the middle of that awesome Pentecost story. There are a couple of lines that talk about families ... and how the Spirit of God wants to have a prominent place, and expects to play a significant role, in our families.

St. Peter quotes the Old Testament prophet Joel: *“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and **your sons and daughters** shall prophesy, and your **young men** shall see visions, and your **old men** shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.”*

He’s talking here about families, isn’t he? God promises, hundreds of years before Christ, that his Holy Spirit will absolutely make a huge impact in our families. That promise comes true on the first Pentecost ... and the Lord wants it to come true in your family, in my family, today.

You see, Christ wants to have a central place in our family lives. And that's what the Holy Spirit does. He leads us, young and old, to Jesus. He gives us saving faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit teaches us and reminds us of what Jesus has to say, and to offer, to our families.

So whether your family is big or little -- whether your family is quiet and civil, or fearsome and wild -- the Lord desires to be right in the middle of everything that goes on. Even if you're the only one in your family, Jesus wants a central place in your everyday living. Families – whatever they look like – are always important to the Lord Jesus. So the **place** we give him in our family life – or don't give him – is really important to think and talk about.

Here at Hope, we're going to think and talk about this together for the next few weeks. The point of this sermon series is not to make you feel guilty about your family's spiritual life. We really do want to challenge you, though, to think through some important questions, and to consider some family issues, from a faith perspective.

Let me tell you about a family that is just starting out. Emma and Andrew got married last weekend. Both of them came from normal, average, wacky families; and now Emma and Andrew are starting their own wacky little family unit.

What role is God going to play in their family? Is Christ going to be at the center of their family life? Are Emma and Andrew going to lean on Christ's strength when they're hurting, learn how to love one another sacrificially from Jesus, honor the Lord -- or ignore the Lord -- in their choices and their lifestyle?

Jesus Christ isn't going to force himself into Emma and Andrew's marriage, is he? They have to want him there. They have to invite him, and make room for him.

God's plan, for Emma and Andrew's family, is for them to be like this (*clasped hands*). And that's what Christ wants for all of us – to have strong, solid, unified relationships that are healthy and positive. Jesus gives us a tremendous gift in our families and friends; and whether you're married or single, divorced or widowed, dating or too young to date, the Lord wants our relationships and our families to be like this.

But the world is constantly pulling and tugging at those relationships, isn't it? Today's families are under tremendous pressure from unhealthy influences in our culture. And our own sinful human nature causes us to say and do such foolish things in our family living, to act out so selfishly, to sometimes pull those God-given relationships apart. It's not easy being married, not easy being a parent, not easy being a family these days, is it?

Colleen and I were talking the other night about the days, not so long ago, when we were running our five kids to basketball, soccer, football, golf, badminton, softball, baseball, tennis, hockey, volleyball, drama, band, choir, paintball ... school events, church events, social events, family events. Does that sound familiar to you?

How do families find time for God? How do we make time, in our tightly-scheduled family lives, for God's Spirit to be at work? Christ **wants** to have a positive, powerful effect on our families and relationships in a hundred different ways.

And we all need, at the center of our families, for Christ to be present, for Christ to be at work. He has divine strength and

power to bind those human relationships. Jesus brings grace, mercy, and healing to our family relationships, like no one else can. God has your family's very best interests in mind every single day ... and the more you allow him to play a role in your family, the more he can help you and bless your family.

It comes down, doesn't it, to the question of what's most important. For your marriage, for your kids, for your extended family, for your God-given friendships, what's most important? Finding time for Christ, or finding time for everything else?

You need to answer that, and figure that out, for your own family. Every family is unique, and has its own dynamics and rhythms. Where does the Lord fit in to **your** family? What role does he play there? How close to the center is he, really? Let's keep wrestling together, for the next three weeks, with what all of this means for your family.

Start today by knowing this. Your loving Savior, Jesus, wants to be at the center of your family life, where he can help keep you strong, solid, unified, healthy, and positive.

God bless your family this day, and all our families! Amen.