

Family Struggles
Ephesians 4:25-32; 5:1-2; 6:10-13
Associate Pastor Duane Lawrence
October 25, 2022

Whenever I think of families struggling, I usually think in terms of each family member not functioning within their role in the family.

There are reasons for this –

The primary reason has to do with not knowing what our roles are as defined in the Bible. The Bible addresses the role of the husband, the role of the wife, and the role of the children.

Another reason that family struggles occur has to do with family members knowing their roles but refusing to function within that role as defined in the Scriptures.

Still another reason for family struggles is that family members do not know their role as defined in the Bible.

Then there are those things that happen in the family that the family has no control over.

Families are always going to have some kind of a struggle or another.

Some struggles occur because of parents favoring one child over the other –

Siblings not getting along –

Dad and Mom not getting along –

Other family members interfering –

Listening to and agreeing with co-workers' bad advice –

Financial concerns –

Medical issues –

Sexual issues –

Mental and emotional concerns –

The list goes on –

2 – Family Struggles

The issue is not whether we will have family struggles or not because they will occur, the issue is how will we respond when family struggles occur.

Let's take a look at these scriptures so we will know how we should respond when family struggles occur.

Ephesians 4:25-32 –

Start by speaking the truth to each other – every member of the family should speak the truth to each other – Dad to Mom – siblings to siblings – parents to children – children to parents. Speaking the truth may cause some temporary pain but in the long run, it will be worth it. Speak the truth –

There will be times when anger will occur but do not allow the anger to cause you to sin. Deal with the issue that caused the anger in the first place and trust the Holy Spirit to control you so that you do not sin. Be aware of what you are saying. Believe that the Lord will help you in this situation and control how you respond so that you do not respond out of anger. Be concerned about others and place yourself in their “shoes,” realizing that the goal is to resolve the issue without getting angry.

When anger is not properly dealt with, it will lead to other issues, such as bitterness, hostility, and it will violate Biblical principles as stated in the Scriptures, and as a result, you will “give the devil an opportunity.”

It is always important to guard our tongue; be careful of what you say as well as how you say it. Do not “let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth” because unwholesome words are out of character with your new life in Christ. Our words instead should be “a word as is good for edification”, meaning, words that will encourage others and be uplifting. Our words also should be words that are “according to the need of the moment”, words that are appropriate and fitting, meeting the needs or desires of the moment.

It is so important as you deal with family concerns to be aware of your words and how you communicate those words, “so that it will give grace to those who hear.” We as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have accepted Him into our lives and have committed our lives to Him, should always be aware of our speech. We have been saved by grace and are being kept by grace, therefore, we should speak with grace. My! My! My!

3 – Family Struggles

Family struggles are real and they will happen in your family and my family, regardless of how long we have been Christians or how mature we may be; what matters is how we respond when family struggles occur.

Our gracious Heavenly Father has given us what we need to manage family struggles. We must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit Whom God has placed in us. We grieve Him when we take matters into our own hands. We grieve Him when we ignore Him, reject Him and “push” Him away. When family struggles occur, we should recognize that Our Helper, the Holy Spirit, is available to come alongside us and help us, remember, He is Our Helper. The Holy Spirit has set up “residency” in us. He is our Helper and He will help us to deal with family matters, regardless of what these matters may be.

It is so important that Christians recognize that they must ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Yes, the Holy Spirit lives in us and He never leaves us, but we must ask (desire) to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit, he/she will be more aware of what they say, what they are thinking, and certainly, what they are doing.

Family struggles will occur and when they do, ask yourself these three questions –

(1) Am I being kind? (2) Am I being tender-hearted? (3) Am I willing to forgive?

If you answered “No” to any of the above questions, ask the Lord to help you in that area and especially as it relates to dealing with family members.

If you answered “Yes” to all of the above questions, give all the glory to God because it is He who has empowered you to do so.

When family struggles occur, we must not rely on our own strength and knowledge but we should rely on the strength and knowledge from the Lord. We should walk in love and “be imitators of God.”

What does it look like to “be imitators of God?”

Let’s look at Ephesians 5:1-2 –

To “be imitators of God” we as believers must follow the example of Christ as He has demonstrated for us. He loved us unconditionally and we must love our family members unconditionally as well. This is not an easy task to do at times but we

4 – Family Struggles

can accomplish this through the power that God has placed in us; we rely on His strength, not ours.

To “be imitators of God” we must be willing to (1) study the Word of God (2) rely on the Holy Spirit to help us understand the Word of God (3) rely on the Holy Spirit to help us apply the Word of God in our lives on a daily basis.

We must remember that though the outer, physical person becomes weaker as life goes on, the inner, spiritual person grows stronger through the Holy Spirit.

As believers submit obediently to the Lord in serving Him, the Holy Spirit will minister to believers so that they can accomplish all that God desires them to accomplish.

Since believers have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit as the “personal power” for living a life that pleases God, family struggles can be dealt with in a manner that pleases God. It pleases God when His children are walking in obedience to Him. Since we are the children of God, our desire and goal should be to become more and more like Our Father.

I Peter 1:14-16 – “as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

We glorify Him best by being like Him -

Holiness defines the believer’s new nature and conduct – unlike the old nature that existed before receiving Christ. Since believers have a relationship with a Holy God, believers should live a holy life, meaning, treating God and His Word with respect and reverence, and this also includes loving our neighbor as we love ourselves (Galatians 5:14), and it certainly includes loving family members!

Family struggles will occur and when they do, we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ must love each other with God’s kind of love, which is sovereign, perfect, unconditional, and divine.

Ephesians 6:10-13 –

What does putting on the whole armor of God have to do with family struggles?

When family struggles occur, it is very important that we recognize that it is nothing that should be taken personally. The struggle is always bigger than us, there is more to be seen from the picture than that is obvious.

5 – Family Struggles

Notice that Paul is admonishing us to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” When dealing with family struggles, it is always wise to appropriate the power that God has

already made available to us. We do not have to go looking for power, it is already present. We do not have to pay for power, it has already been paid for. We do not have to ask Him to send the power on down, the power is already here, we just need to make use of the power.

The power is only available for those who are “in the Lord.” Family struggles can be difficult to deal with when you are dealing with those family members who are not “in the Lord.” Yet, that is not an excuse because the power of the Lord can overcome anything. The Lord’s power, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and the profitability of the Word of God can overcome any family struggle. The Lord is the one who gives us the power we need to manage family struggles, we cannot do this on our own, it is “the power of His might.”

Paul not only admonishes us to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,” he also admonishes us to “Put on the whole armor of God.” When a person receives Christ, there are various resources that the person is not aware of. One of those resources that the person may not be aware of is “the full armor of God.” The armor is invisible but the results of having it on can be seen by the fruit that is produced through the Holy Spirit. We do not “put on” the armor ourselves, it is placed on us by the Lord through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The armor is placed on us so that we “may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” The devil uses the evil system of the world to defeat Christians in spiritual warfare. Christians cannot war against the devil and win without the power of God. This is why it is so important that Christians use what God has given them to defeat the devil as he uses his tricks to deceive people.

Christians have the whole armor of God, power of the Holy Spirit, and the profitability of the Word of God, which are available to defeat the devil, and it certainly is available to assist us with family struggles.

Paul continues to remind us that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood.” If it were flesh and blood, we could handle it with flesh and blood.

II Corinthians 10:3-5 - “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”

6 – Family Struggles

Everyday, families are being attacked one way or the other and it does not matter who those families may be. What we do know is this, families will have struggles. When these struggles occur, believers should always recognize that “we do not war according to the flesh.” Overcoming family struggles must be fought from a Biblical perspective, holding fast to those principles that conform to the example that Christ set for us. It is through practicing Biblical

principles, using spiritual weapons, by committed believers, that can defeat satanic falsehoods, and assaulting errors with the truth.

Christians families are not exempt from struggles. Jesus made it very clear that Christians will experience trouble.

John 16:33 – “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

In spite of the tribulation that will come to believers, Jesus has assured us that we can face the pressure with confidence and courage. We can overcome these pressures by placing our trust in Jesus, Who will give us peace, even in the midst of family struggles.

Defining family members role –

Fathers – “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Husbands – “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;” Ephesians 5:25-28

Wives – “Wives, be subject to your own husband, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.” Ephesians 5:22-24

Children – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.” Ephesians 6:13

7 – Family Struggles

The issue is not whether we will have family struggles or not because they will occur, the issue is how will we respond when the struggles occur.

There needs to be a proper understanding of each role of family members and when there is, there will be harmony in the house, even in the midst of family struggles.

Family struggles will come and when they do we need to –

Follow His Plan –

Fulfill His Purpose –

Function in His Power –

Family Struggles can be resolved if believers will commit themselves to solve them from a Biblical perspective.

“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” Galatians 5:13-14

Duane M. Lawrence
Associate Pastor
Living Word Fellowship Church
Houston, Texas 77088