

“Restoration Project...Family”
Psalm 145:1-9
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Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

<http://www.sermonspice.com/product/27987/ill-need-you>

We need a generation to point others to Christ when no one else will!!!!

Our scripture said, “One generation shall commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts.”

The New Living Translation puts it this way: **Psalm 145:4 New Living Translation. ⁴Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts; let them proclaim your power.**

Families have a responsibility to be the center of faith.

I taught in a private independent Christian school my first year out of college. The parents basically told me they were sending their child to school so they could get Christian values. I guess that’s great and our Board of Education ministries ...The Robin’s Nest, Westlake Christian School, Stars and Comets and Camp Cubber, do a great job of that....however...families can not abandon the responsibility that the home is the center and foundation for faith development. Let me repeat that...families cannot abandon the responsibility that the home is the center and foundation for faith development.

I found an article called “The Importance of Family Faith for Lifelong Faith Formation.” It was written by John Roberto (Lifelong Faith Spring 2012) (John Roberto is the editor of the Lifelong Faith journal, author of Faith Formation 2020, and coauthor of The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry) (This article is developed from the research presented in Chapter 5 of The Spirit and Culture of Youth Ministry by Roland Martinson, Wes Black, and John Roberto. St Paul: EYM Publications, 2010.)

“One of the most significant, and to many startling, findings in the National Study on Youth and Religion (NSYR) is the impact of parental faith and religiosity on the beliefs and practices of teenagers. NSYR found: “of parents who report that their faith is extremely important in their daily lives, 67% of their teens report that faith is extremely or very important in their daily lives; only 8% of those parents’ teens report that faith is not very or not important in their lives.” (Smith and Denton, 57)

The opposite is also true: parents for whom faith is somewhat or not at all important have teens who believe the same thing.

The importance of parental faith and practice on the lives of children and teens is clear.

...the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents. Grandparents and other relatives, mentors, and youth workers can be very influential as well, but normally, parents are most important in forming their children's religious and spiritual lives. . .the best social predictor, although not a guarantee, of what the religious and spiritual lives of youth will look like is what the religious and spiritual lives of their parents do look like.

Youth in families where faith is often expressed by a parent in word and deed are three times more likely to participate in family projects to help others and twice as likely to spend time helping other people than youth from families that did not express faith. Search Institute surveys of 217,000 sixth-- to twelfth--grade youth in public schools (1999--2000) found that youth who say their parents "spent lots of time helping others" are almost twice as likely themselves to serve others.

In the "Study of Exemplary Congregations in Youth Ministry" young people were asked how their parents influenced their faith life, people identified six ways that parental faith influences them.

Here are the 6 greatest influences in order of highest ranking. #1 Values are focused on serving others and God 2. Positive influence on my religious faith 3. Talked with me about my relationship with Jesus Christ 4. Attending Sunday worship 5. Talked with my parent about religious faith 6. Reading the Bible."

I also noticed something in particular. These youth scored the influence of both father and mother. In every single one of these the mother scored higher than the father.

Dads...spiritual restoration of families. We need you to step up to the plate. Literally for the sake of God...and for future generations.

Psalm 145:2 Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. ³ Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

Every day!!! Yes every day blessing your name and praising you God. Oh, great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. Great is His faithfulness! I will declare His greatness.

⁸ The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ⁹ The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

Woo-hoo!!!! We want each generation to know God is gracious and merciful. We want each generation to know that God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. We want each generation to know the Lord is good to all and His mercy is over all!!! Amen???

We have a vision at PHUMC for “All Ages! All In! Loving God! Loving All!” and yet we have children, we have some youth we have some 40 and 50 year olds; we have me and others that have our AARP cards. An age group that we are missing is the millennials...the age group of 18 year olds to early 30’s.

How do we reach them? How do we share God’s love with this generation? You will be hearing more about this in future messages and discussions.

Let’s go back to the restoration of family. To many gathered here we ARE their family. We have students and children coming whose parents do not attend. We need to be involved in that generation’s life. A case in point was Vacation Bible School. But can we not make an effort EVERY Sunday to speak and talk and get to know those of other generations? Huh, huh, huh?

Now I know that there are a variety of family units as part of our church. We have singles (for a variety of reasons) including single parents, we families that include mother and father and children, we have empty nesters, we have couples without children, we have blended families, we have families where children are only with you every other weekend, we have grandparents raising grandchildren, we have families where the adult children have come back home, we have adults caring in their home for their parents. Indeed each family unit looks different.

Regardless of your situation I would declare those in your home, even if it is you by yourself, is your family unit. Are you doing everything you can with God’s help for you to have a restored and renewed spiritual life in your personal family?

We must also add that in your family unit you may be the only Christian. We have many in our church family where one spouse may be a believer and the other is not. We need to be lifting those families up in prayer. It is difficult. We want their ENTIRE family and household to believe. I want to encourage those with those family units to keep on keeping on. Don’t give up the faith. Keep praying. Your church family wants to support you. Also...demonstrate at all times LOVE. Be sensitive to when and how you verbalize your faith. Be lead by the Holy Spirit. Let your Christian actions and deeds be caught and not necessarily forced on your loved one.

Each person in the family must make their own choice. **Joshua 24:15English Standard Version (ESV) ¹⁵ ...choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.**” A choice is made. It doesn’t matter what your parent’s household did, it matters what you do. Just because parent and grandparent were Christians does not genetically make you a Christian.

It is always an interest to me when people say, “Our family have been Methodists for generations.” Now I am happy for that...but I am more concerned that they have been Christians for generations. Yes, Christian Methodists. As with any denomination just because you belong to a Methodist Church doesn’t mean you always act like a Christian. (someone say, Ouch!)

When our first child went to college we faced the typical parental fears of, “Oh no...what trouble is he going to get into? Will he go to church? Will he keep the faith?” Also there was the whole Preacher’s Kid (PK) issue. Sarah and I stared our family while in Seminary, so all our 3 children have know was dad being a preacher. Well, Ben headed off to Jacksonville to the University of North Florida---Go Ospreys!!!! When I would talk with him on the phone I would often, without pushing ask if he had found a church...I said it didn’t have to be a Methodist church. One day he called and said, “Dad, I realized that I couldn’t rely on you and Mom’s faith. I had to make my faith my own. I’m involved in a small group Bible Study on Campus and going to church.” You see he had to make that choice. He had to make it his own.

Choose whom you will serve. Beloved we need families restored. Each family unit. Jeremy Gross has given our prayer this morning and is our Family Discipleship Director and has a passion for small groups to assist with families of all ages in spiritual growth. Remember our definition of family.

Let me take you back a couple of years. The year was around 1974. I was 15 years of age. Okay, do the math. My dad as I have mentioned owned and operated Baldrige Auto Repair. He also was AAA and a 24 hour towing service. Tow trucks we simply called wreckers back in the day. And yes the slogan on his wreckers was “Don’t Cuss, Call Us.” Often Dad would tow in wrecks and the cars would be totaled---seemingly a complete waste.

Sometimes they would sit on the lot, and basically the insurance company would give the car to Dad, because they deemed the car unrepairable, unfixable...worthless.

Well, I had my drivers permit and dad takes me to his lot with the wrecked cars. He shows me a car that had been broad sided on the passenger’s side. It had a wrecked front quarter panel, the side door was pushed in all the way to the driver’s seat, and the back fender was messed up too. Basically dad said, “Here’s your car for your 16th birthday. Wow, that brings excitement doesn’t it? My first car is a wreck, literally. Oh, by the way it was a 1971 Ford Pinto. You, know the kind that I found out later that if you would have been rear ended it probably would have exploded because the gas tank was underneath the back bumper. The color....mustard yellow.

My dad was gifted at not only mechanical auto repair and fixing and repairing engines----by the way as I said last week, I prove the fact that gifts are not passed down from generation to generation. Although Dad’s business was mechanical auto repair he also did auto body repair for the family and business. He built his own wreckers; did his own auto body work on them.

Well, I remember that the front quarter panel (fender) needed to be replaced. Dad ordered and got a new one. I think he might have gone to the junkyard to get the door. And he just repaired the back fender. I remember doing a lot of sanding on that car. Wet-block sanding. Dad would have me sand the car in order to put the primer coat on. Then after the primer he would have me lightly sand it so the paint would stick well to the primer. But the back fender needed restoration. Dad used lots of hammers and bondo---filler---to make that fender look better. I would sand, feel for any unlevel areas and then sand again. After a lot of work that car was restored and looked like new. As new and great as any Ford Pinto looked.

Many of you have restored old cars and know of the work involved in getting them to look like new. I was proud of my new restored car. I couldn't wait to get my 8 track stereo system in it. Instead of the regular horn my dad put an air-horn in that Pinto. I had a great restored car. By the way....it only had 4000 miles on it. It was basically now a new car. I had that car in high school and college. It is the car that I took Sarah on dates in. Bucket seats, stick shift, and an air horn. It did not have air conditioning, but when I taught school in Miami that was the car I had. I even had it when we went to seminary. It was a great car.

However, when you do repair work and restoration work sometimes you can't get everything as good as brand new. Somehow even when all the work dad did on the car he couldn't solve one thing. The car looked great on the outside---completely resorted, but on the inside, somehow there was a leak when it rained. The rain always gathered in the back floorboard of the passenger's side. Dad, creative mechanic as he was, drilled a hole in the floor board so that it could drain. That still didn't work, so I always kept a big sponge in the back floorboard, and every now and then would take it and squeeze it out.

What a car. When that Pinto had finished restoration it had some flaws, but was like new to me. It looked like new. NO one who looked at it would have imagined it had literally been a total wreck. It is amazing what my dad could do to restore a car.

It is amazing what my dad did to restore that car. It is even more amazing what my Heavenly Father can do to restore a life. Are you with me? Xxx You can look like new. You can be rebuilt. Your rough edges can be sanded down. However you may need some spiritual bondo to fill in the emptiness. Beloved God is in the restoration business.

I had some dear friends in the church I served in Merritt Island that had a store and among selling antiques and things they also did furniture restoration. Their names are John and Frances.

I once asked Frances what process they go through to restore furniture. I found the steps that she and John use profound. They are worthy of you getting out a pencil and jotting these down.

In their steps to furniture restoration I think you will see some definite spiritual application. Here's what my dear friends do in the process of furniture restoration:

A. Evaluate. Evaluate to see what needs fixing.

Evaluate your family. Is your family not just being taught Christian values, but are they also being caught. What needs to be "fixed" in your family? What are some things you need to do? What are some things you need to do or not do so that those of other generations observing you notice that you are a Christian.

B. Is the projected outcome going to be worth the effort of time and energy?

Frances says rarely is something so destroyed that it cannot be restored. Let me say that again. Rarely is something so destroyed that it cannot be restored. Friends, your spiritual life is worth it. Your life is worth it. Your family is worth it. Could it take time and energy? Yes.

My Pinto did not become like new overnight. I had to work at it under my Father's direction. And truth be told, my Father actually did most of the work. Are you with me?

C. Strip down so that what is left is good.

Get rid of the bad wood. Throw away the bad stuff. God created you, and He creates good stuff. Created by God, Built for a Purpose. Now take this in the right way, but, are you ready to strip down? You become new as you get rid of the bad.

D. Build up, repair, and beautify from that core which is good.

You see, Jesus is the Master Carpenter. Frances says the interesting thing is that others see just "furniture" and think that it has always been that way. They are not aware, or may not understand or appreciate the restoration process. A process that is a lot of work, and that takes time and energy.

The restored knows where it came from. From the wrecked lot to my dating machine. From the junk heap to an elegant beauty. It is amazing what Restoration can do. Furniture restoration.

Restoration of...me and you, restoration of family. From an old life to a new life in Christ. ...Restoration.

Let's go back to that video that began the message. Let me change it just a bit.

We need our families to be reminded that they should obey God.

We need our families to be there to share their struggles with others.

We need families to know that all things belong to God.

We need families to realize that each one in your family unit is wonderfully made.

We need families to learn from God's wisdom.

We need families to speak the truth in love.

We need families to share joy in following Christ.

We need families to point others toward Christ.