

What Makes a Family Thrive?



This question was posed by a family leader about what they can do to lead their family more intentionally.

Family Leader: *My daily routine of life has always kept me busy. If I was not at my workplace, my time was consumed with driving my children around town to various activities, preparing meals, paying bills, and trying to survive the hectic schedule for that day. This pandemic has opened my eyes to the many distractions of daily living. It awakened my awareness that my role as a family leader was more than just providing for the needs of today. It made me realize my responsibility was to impact my children now as they grow into adulthood in such a way as to touch the generations beyond them. What suggestions do you have that would help me lead our family in a more intentional way?*

Thank you for your question regarding leading your family more intentionally. It is so easy for us to entrench our day with tasks without recognizing the “big picture” of what we are supposed to fulfill as family leaders. As you intuitively recognized, there is a distinct difference between being a leader of “a family” and being the leader of a “thriving family.”

Why do some families seem to do better than others? In the book, *Strangers in Paradise: How Families Adapt to Wealth Across Generations*, James Grubman, Ph.D.'s claims that a successful family is "one that knows who it is, what it stands for, and where it is going." He further explains "a family can thrive only if it permits differentness to be recognized and honored."

In order for a family to thrive, Grubman highlights four key aspects to focus on:

1. **Human Capital** – Who the individual family members are.
2. **Social Capital** – How the family members engage with society at large.
3. **Intellectual Capital** – How the family learns to govern itself.
4. **Financial Capital** – The financial assets of the family.

The most important component of those four is human capital. He adds that it is the responsibility of the family leaders "to teach their children and foster individual purpose and personal identity. He adds that the rising generation must not only be trained to become *independent* of their parents, but also must become *interdependent* and "adopt the attitudes, behaviors, identity, and skills on how the family works together in healthy ways." This "captures a sense of belonging, family identity, pride in the family legacy, and loyalty to the family tribe."

"Your family will survive and thrive if each family member is pursuing his or her potential for growth and happiness," adds author James E. Hughes, Jr.

The following recommendations for thriving as a family was offered by Grubman:

1. Develop a healthy perspective on self-responsibility and philanthropy.
2. Teach the next generation.
3. Honor the next generations' experiences and points of view.