

Marriage Takes Three

I once thought marriage took

Just two to make a go,

But now I am convinced

It takes the Lord also.

And not one marriage fails

Where Christ is asked to enter,

As lovers come together

With Jesus at the center.

But marriage seldom thrives,

And homes are incomplete,

Till He is welcomed there

To help avoid defeat.

In homes where Christ is first

It's obvious to see,

Those unions really work,

“Woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart” (Eccl. 4:10-12).

Precious Moments

Have you ever thought about moments that used to draw families together, that we have lost?

Drive Time

In Deuteronomy 6:6–7, Moses said, These words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. We don't "walk by the way" anymore, but we do drive down the road an awful lot. Teachable moments arise when we ride together as a family, and we allow text messages, ipods, handheld video games, and TV screens to close us off into our own little worlds when we are sitting right next to each other.

And I'm not suggesting that every moment be a haranguing lecture or a forced Bible study. But we can ask our kids how they dealt with the bully at school, or that lesson on evolution in science class. We can point out God's beautiful creation, and we can model good Christian behavior by the way we treat other drivers.

The day when our car-ride conversation is replaced by "shut up and watch the movie," I will feel that I have lost something important.

Dinnertime

Once upon a time, you could count on families being together in the same room at least once a day—at dinnertime. As families get busier, it's harder to guard that moment. Moms have less time to cook, evenings are increasingly invaded upon by homework and activities, and sometimes our paths don't cross long enough even to grab fast food together.

Besides the damage this does to our health, dinnertime is often the very best time in the whole day to ask how school is going, to talk about work and church and God. Except when it's impossible, plan on family dinner. Demand that everyone come to the table—do not allow them to take their plate and disappear. Do not let earbuds or TV intrude on your conversations.

Bedtime

Carl Brecheen points out that the few minutes before bedtime is more important than any other span of time during the day. It puts the cap on the day.

Don't holler at your kids from your easy chair to go to bed, while you are glued to your program. Tuck them in, talk to them, snuggle with them. Review the day, reassure them, pray with them, and talk about the future.

Try, when possible, to go to bed at the same time as your spouse, and spend a few minutes reconnecting rather than falling asleep with the TV on. This is often the only time you get without interruption.

Playtime

I spent a few years coaching and den leading, all the while thinking to myself how much time I was devoting to my children. Actually, I wasn't devoting any! I was wearing myself out with everyone else's kids, (and doing a lot of screaming at my own) but I wasn't devoting any positive attention to my kids.

I realized after a couple of simple outings and walks in the woods that I don't need exhausting organized activities to spend time with the kids. A family trip will provide more quality time in one afternoon than a whole season of soccer practices.

Do be an active community volunteer and coach teams. I'm all for it. Better you than someone else who will cuss at them. Just don't mistake that time for quality time actually spent speaking to and interacting with your own children. It is sadly possible to be at the same time a winning ball coach and a distant father.

—John Guzzetta

I Cannot Say

I cannot say OUR, if I am unconcerned about the lives of my brothers.

I cannot say FATHER, if I do not live as one of His children.

I cannot say WHO IS IN HEAVEN, if all my pursuits are earth-bound.

I cannot say HOLLOWED BE YOUR NAME, if I misuse His name in my everyday speech.

I cannot say YOUR KINGDOM COME, if I am not a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, looking forward to my eternal inheritance.

I cannot say YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN, if I am not willing to cooperate with God's plans.

I cannot say GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD if I am not willing to trust God to provide, and to say thanks when He does.

I cannot say FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS if I refuse to let go of the grudges I bear.

I cannot say DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION if I insist on toying with sin every opportunity I get.

I cannot say BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL if I am not prepared to don the armor of God, take up the sword of the Spirit, and fight!

I cannot say FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER if I neglect to worship His majesty.

I cannot say AMEN, if I am not ready to devote my heart, mind, strength, and soul to doing God's will!
—John Guzzetta