



GOD'S 5G FAMILY PLAN

It was a velvet poster kit. The kind you where the borders were velvet and you colored in the picture on your own. And rather than having paints that you brush on, this kit had bottles of different colored dyes that would allow you to drop a bead or two on the canvas and the dye would absorb into the poster. It was all the thrill that me as a 2nd grader could handle - it was so cool. The best part was mom and dad helped and supervised me on the first one and it turned out great so, I couldn't wait to get the next one done.

I recall my dad saying, "You don't do this by yourself. Make sure someone is around when you work with these." He saw the challenges. Those bottles were hard to control. See if you squeezed the bottles with too much pressure, those nice droplets became squirts of paint. The poster might get ruined or worse, the new sofas and carpet might get damaged.

Well, the next day I couldn't wait to come home from school. I decided I would surprise my folks with a poster made especially for them by their gifted and Akamai daughter with no spills, at all. Grandpa was home in the yard so that meant someone was around, so that meant I was okay, right? I set paper down on the table and began my work. Drop after drop it was awesome. After a little while, I noticed the red/pink bottle was becoming especially challenging to squeeze. It was hard. So, I pushed harder. Nothing. The bottle was still pretty full, but nothing came out. I noticed the hole seemed clogged. So, I grabbed a needle and poked it through. Akamai. I've seen my dad unstuck things in the past that way. The dye began to flow again. Cool beans. Until the next drop. Stuck again. This time I squeezed the bottle even harder but nothing happened so I put in on the table where I could get a good grip and (squeeze) and this time the ink shot out like a laser. On to the ceiling. The white ceiling now had purple and pink droplets. And there was dye everywhere. On me, on the table, on the carpet, on the new sofas. Ugh. No! All I could think was, I am dead. So, I did what any other kid would do. I panicked and began to clean it up. The panels on the glass table cleaned up fine, but some of dye wouldn't come out of the wood frame. I cleaned the carpet as best as I could. I threw wet paper towels at the ceiling to try to get off as much as I could. By the time I got to the sofa, it had dried. I couldn't get any of it off. So, what could I do? Akamai! I flipped the cushions over so no one would discover my mess. At least that is what I had hoped. How many of us can say I made a mess? Maybe flipped over a few cushions. Yup, we've all made messes. It's a part of who we are. There are messes we learn from, messes we talk and joke about, and messes well, we just hide.

1. Have you ever made a mess? What did you do?

We've been going through our ONE GENERATION series where we have been discussing relationships, marriage, and family. Some of us might feel my family, my marriage, my relationship, my life doesn't look like what we have been discussing. Here's a secret - if we are truly honest, none of us do. None of us have it down 100%. We all fall short. That's right, sorry to say, but even YOU. And yes, sounds cliché, but God knows. And while it is not an excuse, it is freeing and comforting to know He loves us still and that we are in good company. Turn to



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your neighbor and say, "You are in good company." See just about every single person in the Bible had a mess. Every person's life did not look exactly picture perfect with a storybook ending of happily ever after.

That is why in the Old Testament there was the book of Leviticus. That is why God gave us those tablets that held the Ten Commandments. That is why God gave us Charleston Heston - ha, ha. But seriously, from the very beginning we didn't get things exactly right. The law from the Old Testament, the temple, and all else was God's attempt to give His kids boundaries (everybody say boundaries), to give his insights and a way to good living, to give His stained kids a way to connect with a stainless God and, in the process be cleansed. But like me and my dye tubes, staying in the boundaries and following instruction proves difficult.

2. Does the Bible speak about folks who made messes? Consider their situations. What was the purpose of the law in the Old Testament? What does it mean that Jesus did not come to abolish the law in the Old Testament, but rather to satisfy the law. How did He satisfy the law? What does that mean to you and me?

Difficult because we may not realize the helps that God is providing is actually for us. Difficult because we may be bound by things of our past, difficult because we realize boundaries have been breached, maybe we are not honoring those around us, maybe we are feeling as if things are not where or what we had hoped. Perhaps you might have "situations" that are happening right now, that are not consistent with what you know our Heavenly Father wants for you. What do you do?

Perhaps one of the most popular stories is told about the Prodigal son. Luke chapter 15 tells of this wayward son who went "wonkie" on his Father, leaves the house, and squandered his inheritance doing things his own way. He was in a real predicament. Having nothing and dining with pigs, he finally chooses to return home and make amends with His Father. Luke shares the son rehearsed all the way the speech and apology he would give his father.

At this point you might say, ok, well that's "major" but what does that mean to me and how do I begin to make my way toward what God would want for my life? Well, we do like the prodigal son and begin to clean up our mess. But how when my mess is so large, where do I begin?

3. How does the son make his way back to the Father? How do we make our way back?

Would you Begin at the beginning? - Say, begin at the beginning? That's right. Return to the Father. As we discussed in previous weeks, make God your center. That's what the prodigal did. He returned to the Father. In the process of heading back to him, the prodigal made his dad, his destination, his True North.

One's true north has been said to be "the orienting fixed point of one's life by which all things, ideals, beliefs, are determined." Place God at the center. Let him be your destination and true north.

4. What is your true North?

Then consider these three things (I used DYE as an acronym so prayerfully we can all benefit from my mess). My past reminds me, but it doesn't define me. God defines and refines me and he does you two. But getting back to what we were discussing:

I. DISCERN AREAS OF NEED

5. Do you have areas of need?

What areas need adjustments? What areas are good? Keep the good and ask the Lord to reveal to you the areas that need adjusting. Is anything keeping you from fully turning the situation, area of your life over to God? Is it shame? Is it unworthiness? Is it pride? Is it the fear of man? Just saying pride is the basis for the fear of man.

Are you worried about judgement or ridicule? That folks will think less of you? When that arises, don't entertain those thoughts. Why? Because the fear of man erupts in lies that will hold you back, oppress you, and keep you from realizing God's best plan. It is a tool of the enemy that when we entertain, we play into and give permission to keep you from seeking God's very best for you, your relationships, your spouse, your children, your family. It is interesting that as we move forward in faith to tend to the areas of need, God helps us overcome and exchange our fears of man and the world which grips and paralyzes us and gives us the gift of the fear of the Lord which brings reverence and freedom. (Bevere)

"Who, then, are those who fear the LORD? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose," (Psalm 25:12, NIV).

As you discern, ask the question, "What is God saying?" This is critical to rise above our past and move forward in His freedom.

"Our past may remind us, but it doesn't need to define us."

Remember me and sofas? I hid all the evidence because of fear of consequences. Punishment. And rejection. It kept me captive the entire time until I was able to talk to my dad. To this day, it is a great reminder me of what happens when I am not obedient. What happens when I choose my way over God's way. While my dad was and is not God, the position he held in my life at the time was such. When my dad did talk to me about the situation, he was upset and disappointed, but did not make me scrub the sofa until it was clean or until the

carpet was perfect or until the ceiling and table were spotless. In fact, my mom and dad helped me try to clean up the mess. My consequence was no more of that poster kit and for as long we had the sofa, the spots on it, the ceiling, and the carpet were gentle reminders of my folly and their grace. So we ask God to reveal these areas of need; then we,

II. YIELD TO HIS SPIRIT

6. In those areas, how do you and would you yield to His Spirit?

Yield to the Holy Spirit in timing and method. Don't try to make change all at once. Messes don't happen overnight, they happen over time. I was thinking about doing that poster all that evening. While in school, I was thinking already when and what I would do, I even planned which poster from the kit I would grab and the colors I would use. While my disobedience was revealed in a moment, it was planned and step by step became my path.

The Holy Spirit will help to lead us in perfect timing and action. But what is this Holy Spirit. Jesus at the end of his earthly ministry tells us, the Holy Spirit will be sent by God to come in Jesus' place and be our helper, our advocate, our comforter, and our teacher.

The best way I know how to explain this is that there is the world's take, the Holy Spirit leading, and ours. Our going back and forth between the two is the tension we live in if we don't yield to the spirit. I can tell you, and I have had a lot of messes, and while not perfect - you can ask my husband, following Jesus has made my life better and made me better at life. Yielding to the Holy Spirit has helped me to do this. The Holy Spirit is a continuation of God's promise to ...

"instruct you (us) and teach you (us) in the way you (we) should go; and counsel you (us) with His loving eye on you (us)." (NIV) So that as we yield to and follow Him, He will show us the way. Then, lastly ... would you ...

III. ENGAGE WITH THE FATHER

7. How do you engage with the Father?

That is what the prodigal did. He engaged the father. He did not "bow out", rather he humbled himself and bowed down. Can you imagine the internal struggles the prodigal son had to swallow his pride and go to his father and admit he was wrong. If that was me I would be replaying all the conversations leading up to my leaving in my head. Everything I might have said. Then to clean myself up, and go back to clean up the mess I made at home. Whooo! The heartache and hurt I may have caused. Wow! It might have taken me everything I had to not "bow out" but to remain committed to making the father my center and coming back to him. But here's one of the best parts ...



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The best, most crazy and amazing part of this homecoming - is that while the son is a little away, it is the father who comes running with a heart of compassion to receive His son. It's just not heard of - so many times we hear of how the father angered, hurt and frustrated might have rejected him or told him, "you lost everything. Hard the life. Good for you." But "no" not this father.

The prodigal went back home and engaged with the Father and was welcomed back with open arms. Now I would imagine your situation is not anywhere near the prodigal son's or maybe it is. Maybe it's making a few adjustments here and there, or maybe it's coming back all together, whatever it looks like, here's the great thing, just as the son came back. We can too! And while we may have some adjustments, some consequences, some humbling of hearts, the Father's heart and arm is always open to us. Ready to help us clean our mess and remind us that we are made new in His Spirit. Amen.