

**WHEN
ALL ELSE
HAS
FAILED**

Elements of Family 2:

WHEN ALL ELSE HAS FAILED

Sept. 9, 2012

Sermon in a sentence: When all else has failed, turn to Jesus, pray, forgive, give thanks, and worship.

Scriptures: 1 Pet. 2:11-25 NLT; Matt. 11:28-30; Ps. 55:22 (1 Pet. 5:7); Mark 11:25

Last week as we discussed the meaning of the word “family” and reminded ourselves of God’s purpose and plan for our families, I’m sure many of you may have tuned out because of the absolute trauma, pain and dysfunction you are presently living through or have endured in the past with regard to your own family.

For some, you know there is absolutely no hope, humanly speaking, of your marriage being salvaged, your children coming back into relationship with you, your in-laws accepting you, meddling, backbiting relatives ceasing to torment you, or even your family accepting your choice to follow Jesus.

In many instances, you cannot possibly entertain the thought of ever trying *anything* again to heal your family relationships that are now completely broken and shattered.

In a search for understanding or acceptance, excitement and their ‘15 minutes of fame’, (or possibly even a solution), some folks go on television and reveal all the dirtiest secrets of their failed relationships.

Of course, your situation is not the first dysfunctional mess that has ever existed. Examples abound in scripture of the kind of messes we still see today:

- **Think of the continuing battle between the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac**
- **Think of the battle between Jacob and Esau after Jacob stole his brother's most precious possession**
- **Think of Leah's pain in being given to a man who did not love her and her ensuing life of rejection**
- **Think of Hannah as she constantly enduring Peninnah's scorn for being childless**
- **Think about David running for his life from his own father-in-law Saul**
- **Think about Abigail living with and protecting an ungrateful husband who almost got their whole household killed**
- **Think of Hosea's shame in being rejected by his wife Gomer, who left him to become a prostitute. Then God told him to buy her back (for half the price of a common slave)!**

So, in times like these, we need to turn our attention to God and His Word and let it speak to us *individually*, allowing it to help us control *our own* responses to our situations. (In the end, *I* am really the only one I have control over!)

Sometimes it may seem simplistic to say: "let's see what the Bible has to say about this or that", but honestly, there is no better place to go than to the place where God reveals His will and plan for humanity. We are often prone to go looking for big, fancy, expensive man-made solutions, when we can access the wisdom of God for free!

Dear friends, I warn you ... to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. **12**Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God.... **15**It is God's will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. **17**Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God, and respect the king. **18**You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you—not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel. **19**For God is pleased with you when you do what you know is right and patiently endure unfair treatment. **20**Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you. **21**For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. **22**He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. **23**He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. **24**He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed. **25**Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls. (1 Pet. 2:11-25 NLT, (edited))

As you can see, this passage speaks to us personally. This is all about *my* response and *your* response to unfair treatment and blatant injustice. So, we need to consider the example of our incomparable Lord and Saviour, and then turn everything over to Him in prayer. He says:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. **29**“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS (Jer. 6:16). **30**“For My

yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30 NASB)

Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. (Ps. 55:22 NASB (1 Pet. 5:7))

What tends to happen is that we turn our gaze inward in times of stress and emotional pain, stoically enduring our situation, or wallowing in despair, or sometimes even reveling in our own suffering. These are definitely not God-given solutions for our problems! His solution is for us to turn to *Him* and echo the words of Jesus as He hung on the cross: “Father, *forgive them....*” (Luke 23:34), and pray our way through our dilemmas. At another time He said:

...whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (Mark 11:25 NASB)

Forgiveness is a tremendously powerful force. It has the ability to open prison doors in our minds and hearts and free us to live and love again. We must learn and practice forgiveness because nothing destroys our spirit like unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment.

What other tools do we have at our disposal? Things we can do personally, without having to wait for positive responses from others?

- **Be a thanks-giver!**

In the middle of the struggles we go through, especially the impossible ones we know we cannot fix, we can easily enter into the realm of despair and complaint, totally missing the point that we serve a great God who is always worthy of honour, glory, praise and thanksgiving, no matter what we're going through!

You may well respond: "It's obvious you don't have a clue what I'm going through. What on earth do I have in my life to give thanks for"? Well, I won't try to answer that question for you - that's something you actually have to figure out for yourself.

For those who have thankfulness as a core element in their character, they find positive reasons for praise in the midst of the horrors life sometimes takes us through. If you can only ever see the things that are bad in your life, you need a radical change to take place *today*.

However, when we *do* start going through the list of things one should give thanks for, we have to conclude that in spite of everything, God has been good to us!

If you have a sound mind, a full stomach, a sense of humour, two or three true friends, a few dollars in your pocket, hope for a better tomorrow, salvation in your soul, the Spirit of God dwelling inside, skills and resources to make a living, life in a peaceful country without the constant fear of war or natural disasters, a good education, the Word of God, and eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, you have lots of reasons to be thankful!

- Also, be a worshiper!

Worship is the thought process, words and actions of acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus Christ, bowing in reverence before Him and giving Him complete control of our lives.

When all else has failed, do we still acknowledge Him as our Lord and master? Worship takes place when *our* knees willingly bow and *our* tongues gladly confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11)!

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When all else has failed, do not crumble under the pressure. The Lord *has* not and *will* not give you more than you can bear. **Turn your eyes upon Jesus.** Call out to Him in **prayer**. **Forgive** those who have wronged you, fully and freely. **Give thanks** to God with a grateful heart and **worship** Him in spirit and in truth.