

Leading Forward

Family Takes Time



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Two news stories caught my attention during January.

The first was Steve Blow's

column in the Dallas Morning News on Sunday, January 16, 2011. He wrote about three brothers who married three sisters. They just celebrated their wedding anniversaries with a Caribbean cruise. They have been married 67, 64, and 60 years respectively. Their secret to happy marriages was expressed as "a whole lot of give and take."

The second story appeared on WFAA Channel 8 in Dallas the following Wednesday. It reported the world record of an Irving man who played 611 rounds of golf in 2010. Averaging a score of 78.5 per round, he stated that chasing the little white dimpled ball is his first love. He also admitted that his obsession with the sport led to two divorces.

Those are definitely two stories in contrast, but they are a reminder that marriages and families take time and commitment.

Sometimes in the world of church and ministry, we begin to believe that involvement in the life of a church or a call to ministry is the glue that keeps a family strong.

While it may be a factor, the truth is that we see deeply committed church members and ministers whose marriages and families fall apart far too often.

While my job centers around working with churches in helping them stay healthy and strong, my observation is that when church leaders and ministers have healthy and strong marriages and families, my job is much easier and so is theirs. Is there a key to healthy marriages and families?

Books have been written by very learned professionals listing and explaining many key

ingredients for strong families. My observations cause me to narrow in on one specific factor – **TIME!**

Many people have said that in our day *time is money*. But in marriages and families, time spent with one's spouse and children is often the element that defines care, love, and commitment. Words are easily spoken, but giving time to attend a child's school activities or sports event affirms what the words only echoed. For a husband to tell his wife he loves her is an action that needs to happen often, but if no time is

spent with her, she begins to question the words.

Involvement in church and ministry does not eliminate or compensate for time spent with family. In fact, ministry can often become the excuse for not having spent time with one's family. This applies equally to church leaders and to ministers.

Is there an easy solution to the time factor? Probably not easy, but there is an answer! Setting aside time on one's calendar early for family puts them as a priority rather than an afterthought. Time for family should not be cancelled except for an emergency. Certainly not everything we are asked to do is an emergency.

Churches can help their ministers and leaders by eliminating meaningless meetings; by not expecting a minister to be at everything; and by insisting that ministers take time off weekly as well as vacation times. In a day of constant stress and family breakups, the time one spends with family is not just *nice*, it is essential!

I challenge all of the churches in our association to seek ways to give families more time together. There is no doubt in my mind – the stronger the families of church leaders and ministers become, the stronger the church will become. *It just takes some time.*



**"IF A HOUSE IS
DIVIDED
AGAINST ITSELF,
THAT HOUSE
CANNOT STAND."
MARK 3:25**