



with Berni Dymet

3 Ways to Stop Your Family from Falling Apart

With families falling apart en masse, here are three very practical, very do-able things that you can do, to stop your family from falling apart.

christianityworks

how to stop your
family from falling apart

by berni dymet



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EAT TOGETHER

There's nothing quite like having a meal together from time to time to develop the bonds of friendship. We can meet someone at work, or in passing somehow, and think 'I really enjoy their company'. But when we have a meal together, somehow, that takes the relationship to a whole new level. We've all had that experience.

I'm not quite sure what makes eating together so important to us - but it is. It's one of the primary ways that we form relationships.

Perhaps it's the fact that as we sit with someone over a meal, we have the time to

engage them in conversation. Perhaps it's the simple act of sharing food. Perhaps it's the fact that often times, one of the parties at the table has put time and effort into preparing the meal.

Just the other night, some friends of ours invited Jacqui, my wife, and me to their place for dinner. It was a simple meal - nothing fancy you understand - and for about three hours we enjoyed their company. We were already friends with this couple, but somehow, having that time together in their home, eating a meal that they'd prepared for us, deepened those bonds of friendship.

It's a very special thing. And in many cultures the whole idea of a man and a woman dating each other places a lot of emphasis on going out for meals together.

Eating meals together with other people, in almost every culture on the planet, is an incredibly important part of building and strengthening relationships. We already know



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that, but just stopping to think about it really drives it home, doesn't it?

So why is it then, that we're seeing declining rates of families having meals together? In the UK, for instance, one in ten families never sits down to an evening meal together. But that same study - which surveyed 3,000 families - revealed that two thirds of children yearn for a return to the traditional family dinner time. And four out of 10 children have even asked their mother or father to have more evening meals together as a family.

A similar study conducted in New Zealand found that the majority of 15 year olds, 64.7%, reported that they shared a main meal with their parents around a table several times a week. That sounds great, until you realise that 35.3% - or just over a third - reported that they *didn't* share a main meal with their parents around a table several times a week.

The newspaper, USA Today had this to say on the whole subject of family dinners:

Family dinners help kids avoid risky behaviors and may even help them in school. But new research shows that the more frequent these dinners, the better the adolescents fare emotionally, says new research published this week in the Journal of Adolescent Health.

The effect doesn't plateau after three or four dinners a week, says co-author Frank Elgar, an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at McGill University in Montréal. The more dinners a week the better.

With each additional dinner, researchers found fewer emotional and behavioral problems, greater emotional well-being, more trusting and helpful behaviors toward others and higher life satisfaction, regardless of gender, age or family economics. The study was based on a nationally representative sample of 26,069 Canadian adolescents age 11 to 15 in 2010.

Do we really need more studies and statistics to tell us what we already know -



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eating meals together is good for children, and good for families? Eating meals together stops people from falling apart and families from falling apart. And yet it's something that, we're doing less and less of.

It's as though we're hell bent on destroying our families.

Your family contains the most precious people on the earth to you, right? What's one thing, just one thing that you can do to stop your family from falling apart? Eat meals together as often as you possibly can. They're important for children, they're especially important for teenagers and they're important, too, for husbands and wives.

Over the dinner table in the evening we check in with each other. We find out what's been happening in each other's day. How are the rest of our family members going? What joys and triumphs did they have today? What sadness and disappointments?

Time Magazine puts it this way:

Studies show that the more often families eat together, the less likely kids are to smoke, drink, do drugs, get depressed, develop eating disorders and consider suicide, and the more likely they are to do well in school, delay having sex, eat their vegetables, learn big words and know which fork to use. "If it were just about food, we would squirt it into their mouths with a tube," says Robin Fox, an anthropologist who teaches at Rutgers University in New Jersey, about the mysterious way that family dinner engraves our souls. "A meal is about civilizing children. It's about teaching them to be a member of their culture."

I want to encourage you to take this one thing in your family seriously. It's all about being a family; providing a safe place for one another - not just the children, but also the adults. I've found that our kids need us just as much, differently, but just as much now that they're young adults.

And husbands and wives - make sure that you make time on a regular basis to have dinner together, just the two of you. Whether it's at home, or going out on a date, it's so important to connect. It seems that we're so intent on connecting with the world through social media and email and all the other electronic relationship destroyers, that we've forgotten to connect with the people we love the most.

This one thing is so simple to do; it's so practical. Okay, perhaps it will require some changes to entrenched routines. Perhaps your children will raise their eyebrows or wonder what's going on. But remember that in the UK study that we looked at earlier - most of the children surveyed, long for a return to regular family mealtimes. And for you, it's perhaps the simplest, most practical thing that you can do to stop your family from falling apart.

Just sit down once every day and have a meal with your family. Can it really be that simple? Sure it can!



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If the studies are right, it's certainly worth a try.

As I open my Bible there seems to be precious little in it about sharing a meal together as a family. Or ... is there?

Back in the times when the various books of the Bible were written, there weren't all the distractions that we have today tearing families apart. No cable television, mobile phones, internet, or social media.

And yet it seems that God sees the family as the central piece in bringing children close to Him. This is what God says to His people way back in the book of Deuteronomy:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

(Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

Talk to your children about God. And to the church He says in the New Testament:

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (Hebrew 10:25)

Bring those two together into the modern day malady of families falling apart, and the message is clear. We need to spend time together as a family. It's good for us. It's God's will for us. And the easiest way to start is to do what comes naturally - eat meals together. It really is that simple!

PLAY TOGETHER

Okay, so we're looking at how to stop our families from falling apart. Not in theory, but in practice. Simple things that you can do, to keep your precious family together. And this is the easiest one of them all.

Can I ask you a question? What do you do with your spare time? Do you invest it, spend it, or waste it? We all have spare time, and time spent doing something we really enjoy isn't time wasted at all. We all need to relax and enjoy ourselves. But sometimes we waste our time.

Let's take a look at your week and break it down. We're all different of course, but here's a typical week. You make your own modifications to suit your lifestyle as we go along.

Each week has a standard 168 hours. The average working week is 40 hours, so that leaves 128 hours. Let's say you spend 7.5 hours commuting (that's 1.5 hours five times a week) now we're down to 120 hours roughly. Say 2 hours a day (14 hours a week) preparing and eating meals, leaves 106 hours.

We've forgotten sleep. Can't forget sleep! Let's say you're getting 8 hours a night there's another 56 hours for the week. Now we're down to 50 hours and right there, you have your spare time.

Some of that's going to be taken up with necessary chores like washing, cleaning and shopping - let's say they add up to 10 hours. What's left now is 40 hours.



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40 hours of spare time. That's pretty much the same as the average working week. 40 hours is rather a lot, wouldn't you agree? As I said, different people have different routines. I work longer than the average and sleep slightly less than the average. So I'm probably closer to 30 hours of spare time a week - but that's still rather a lot. That's over 4 hours a day of spare time on average - less on weekdays, more on weekends.

30 hours, 40 hours, whatever your spare time availability is, that's rather a lot. Some of it, you're going to want to rest and spend on your own. Just getting some "me" time is important to recharge your batteries - watch a bit of TV perhaps, hop onto Facebook, surf the Internet, whatever it is you enjoy doing; perhaps reading a good book. Fantastic.!

But there's one very important thing that we haven't talked about yet when it comes to our leisure time - and that is your family: husbands with wives, wives with husbands, parents with children, children with parents.

Last time I checked, being a family was meant to be fun. It's not all fun of course. Disciplining our children isn't always fun. Fights and arguments aren't always fun. Sometimes being a family is hard work. That's okay. That's the way it was meant to be. But here's what I've noticed. The more fun families have together, the less time they spend fighting and arguing; the more fun they have together, the less it feels like hard work.

So, here's my question for you today. How much fun are you having together as a family? Do you plan fun times into your busy week? Do you have spontaneous fun time, where you forget about your busy schedule and just laugh and play together?

When I was a young lad, my father worked really hard. He emigrated to Australia after WW II and whilst he had an engineering degree, it wasn't recognised in this country. So, with a young family and a demanding job, he went back to university and studied for 7 years part time. (I can't imagine how soul-destroying that must have been.)

He had a senior position in the Steel Works in the town where we lived and so spent long hours at work. But sometime early on he, decided that he and I would collect stamps together – Australian stamps, European stamps. It was our hobby together and we built up quite a stamp collection.

That was almost half a century ago. I had those stamps valued recently. They came to just a few hundred dollars, nothing really. But the time that we spent together as father and son remains a priceless memory for me that I shall treasure until my dying day.

And when we were older, both my sister and I were heavily into music. We each played three instruments, and each weeknight there was something on – lessons, orchestra practice etc. By and large it was our father who would take us to all these things, wait for us in the car, and talk to us on the way there and back. Again, that's something I value greatly. He took some of his precious spare time, and invested it in his family – in us, in me.



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Families that play together, stay together. One of the greatest things that you and I can do to stop our families from falling apart, is to have fun together. To deliberately schedule time. To plan time and activities - hobbies, car rides, whatever - that are times of fun that you can have together as family.

Okay, they're not always exactly what we want to do. But those times of fun together as a family are the times that your children will treasure when you, like my father, are long gone.

What can you do to stop your family from falling apart? Play together; waste time on each other having simple fun, enjoying simple pleasures.

Do it deliberately. Do it in the face of the pressing realities that crowd out your time because your family, your children, are truly the most precious people on the planet. *Doesn't it make sense to invest some of your precious time in them?*

Just stop and think. What do your kids enjoy doing? Is it going down to the park to kick a football around? Or going to a movie? Playing dress ups, or perhaps the odd shopping trip together? When we plan to do things with our families that make us laugh and enjoy life, that's powerful stuff.

And here's the other thing. Husbands and wives - you need to plan some fun times together too.

For Jacqui and me, Saturday is our day. We often go for a drive or a walk somewhere. I'm really quite deliberate about planning something that we're both going to enjoy doing, because fun keeps us close. Time together doing something we both enjoy keeps us talking about things.

How easy it is to allow the burdens that we carry around on our shoulders to rob us of the fun we can have in life? The decision whether or not to have fun together as a family, is a decision that we each can make.



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So ... what will you decide?

Once again, this isn't something that the Bible talks about specifically, probably because when it was written, life wasn't as crazy and hectic as it is today. There weren't the individual, isolated entertainment options that we have today.

In the evening, after dinner, there was no television, there was not electricity even, and so families naturally spent time together and invented their own entertainment. But the wealthier we become, the more options we have and the less fun we have together as families.

What God's Word does tell us to do is to make good use of our time and not to waste it. Because ... time is short.

*Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.
(Ephesians 5:15-16)*

In other words, use your time wisely.
Compare it to this admonition:

Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. (1 Timothy 5:13)

It's pretty obvious, isn't it?

There are good ways to spend our time, and some really bad ways to spend our time. And one of the best ways that we can spend our time - one of the greatest and most pleasurable investments that we can make in the future - is to have fun; to make some time to play with our families.

Can it really be that difficult to do?

Families that play together, stay together.

PRAY TOGETHER

The only sort of prayer the Bible talks about, is the sort that has powerful results. In fact, prayer that has powerful results is entirely normal in God's sight.

So as we talk about our families and the things that you and I can do to stop them falling apart, how can we possibly pass up the opportunity to talk about prayer? I have a very simple view of prayer. It goes something like this.

Prayer is when we join hands with God, for His will to be done on this earth. Do you remember Jesus' master class on prayer? It was

very simple. The Disciples came to Him and asked Him to teach them how to pray. It was common for a rabbi to teach his disciples, to give them a form of prayer that they could use.

So, Jesus obliged. He taught them how to pray:

Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors, And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

(Matthew 6:9-13)

Do you see?

It's all about getting God's will done on this earth, and trusting Him for His provision and His forgiveness.

So let me ask you: is it God's will for your family to stay together? Is it God's will for your children to learn to honour their parents and love and obey God with glad and willing

hearts? Is it God's will for your family to reflect the wonder of His love in a world where families are falling apart en masse?

I don't think you have to be such a great theologian, to be able to answer a resounding 'yes' to all of those questions.

And if we lived in a perfect world with a perfect family it would be pretty easy for us to live out His will. No problem at all.

But we don't live in a perfect world. And, I'm guessing, you don't have a perfect family. Am I right? You have the sort of family that has conflicts and clashes; personalities that sometimes rub one another the wrong way. You have a family with the odd black sheep, perhaps even some very difficult teenagers, going through puberty.

We somehow imagine that out there somewhere is some perfect family, but that's simply not true. Every family has its issues and yours (and mine) is no exception to that universal reality. In fact, sometimes it can seem

that keeping your family together - stopping it from falling apart - is completely impossible. Do you know why that is?

Because it's true. There are some things that you can't do to keep your family together.

They require supernatural power; they require the power of God.

Fortunately, God has a mighty heart for your family and He is ready, willing and able to step in and see His will done, when your family seems intent on tearing itself apart.

That's where prayer comes in.

Let's imagine that there's a teenager in your family - perhaps it's your son or your grandson - who is going completely off the rails. He's caught up with the wrong crowd (a recipe for disaster if ever you saw one) and he may even be into drugs. He's out till all hours and you're beside yourself. You just don't know what to do.

Nothing you say or do seems to make a one iota of difference. Nothing you do makes one



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iota of difference. You're completely powerless to help him and if something doesn't give, he's going to find himself in serious trouble (or worse!).

Well, there is something that you can do. You can pray! Hmm. Sounds rather feeble doesn't it? Because you want to do something real and practical. Have a listen to this:

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 15:7)

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. (Mark 11:24)

And I tell you, ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everybody who asks receives, everybody who seeks, finds and to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. (Luke 11:9,10)

Now, you may notice something about those three Scriptures - they are all things that Jesus said. I could have chosen passages from

the Old Testament or, from the Epistles - things that God said through other people. But I've deliberately chosen the things that Jesus said, so that the power of what God is saying impacts your heart.

Remember, at the beginning of this chapter I said that the only sort of prayer the Bible teaches about, is the sort that has powerful results. In fact, prayer that yields powerful results is entirely normal in God's sight. So, when you pray for that wayward teenager who's on the road to self-destruction, you are actually doing the single, most powerful thing that you can possibly do.

When you pray for the husband and father who's a workaholic; when you pray for the young daughter who's going out on her first date with a boy; when you pray for the mother who is struggling with postnatal depression; when you pray for the marriage that seems to be coming apart at the seams, you are doing the most powerful thing that you can possibly do. Why?

Because you are joining hands with God, the maker of the heavens and the earth; the same God who has a soft tender heart for your family. You're joining hands with that God. The God who has the power, the wisdom and the desire to do the things that you cannot do.

Is this impacting you? Is the mighty, powerful Word of God sinking into your heart and bringing hope back for you? Because that's exactly what God intends to do through His Word today. **The single most powerful thing that you can do for your family is to pray for them.**

I pray for my wife and my children almost every day. I bring them before the Lord. I ask for Him to protect them, to hold them; to heal them where they need healing; to strengthen them where they need strengthening.; to test them and discipline them with the love of a Father. And there's someone else I pray for too - me - that I will have the wisdom and tenderness of heart to be the husband and father, that God wants me to be.



How much and how
often do you pray for your
family as a whole?

Individually?

And how often do you
pray together as a family?

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How much and how often do you pray for your family as a whole? Individually? And how often do you pray together as a family? It's a powerful thing for a husband and wife to pray together. It's a powerful thing for children to learn how to pray from their parents, as the family prays together.

Sadly, very few families pray together. But imagine what would happen if we took this one, most powerful thing that we can do for our family - to pray - and did it together! Imagine the transformative power as God changes the hearts of each member of your family through prayer. Imagine what your children would learn, how it would change them, as they see God answer the prayers of your family.

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for you by my father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.
(Matthew 18:19-20)

Imagine if you gathered together in prayer and had Jesus in your midst. Come on! Prayer that yields powerful results is normal in God's sight. Do you see the power of what it is that we're talking about here?

What if a good chunk of your prayer life was focussed on your family? What if your family together, as a family under God, prayed to Him together? How different would your family be? Fathers, husbands – it's up to you, as the spiritual head of your household, to take the lead here.

Families that pray together, stay together.

How about it?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Berni Dymet is a contemporary Christian communicator with a passion for sharing the Good News of Jesus right into the middle of life. He comes from the perspective that this Christianity thing - it isn't just a faith that lives in our heads or even our hearts, but that it actually works right here in the middle of our lives.

Christianity actually works when we dare to accept Jesus Christ into our lives!! Not just as Saviour, but also as Lord.

Millions of people around the globe tune into Berni's radio programs each week. The Lord has given him a special gift for sharing the Gospel in a truly practical way. In a way that really connects into the hearts and lives of real people in real places, transforming their lives. That's what the ministry of Christianityworks is all about. Leading people into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

But Berni's passion, his enthusiasm and his insights into the day to day realities of life are simply tools in God's hands. The real change agent is God Himself.

And to Him - and Him alone - be all the glory.

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3 Ways to Stop Your Family from Falling Apart



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Families today are under attack from all directions. A lot of it has to do with the relentless march of the armies of individualism and materialism across the globe. There are forces at play that are tearing families apart. And that's something that our enemy, the devil, is delighted with.

In this booklet, Berni Dymet will be opening God's Word to discover what He has to say about your family. It's all about what you can do, to stop your family, from falling apart.

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