

Bringing Down the House

Week 2 | Heroes

■ BOTTOM LINE

Cease striving. Understand and believe that we can live FROM the love of God rather than FOR the approval of others.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

At one point or another, we all feel we don't measure up to our expectations for ourselves or the expectations of our families. Our value can become deeply tied to how we "perform" in our most important relationships. Striving is tiring, especially when we feel we simply cannot measure up. God desires for us to live in freedom from the chains of approval!

■ SCRIPTURE

James 4:1-3, Galatians 1:10, John 15:4-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who was your "hero" when you were a kid? Who did you want to be like when you grew up?
2. Listen to this statement: "I don't measure up to my expectations of myself or the expectations of my family. My value feels deeply connected to how I perform in my most important relationships, and I often feel that I'm not measuring up." Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? Can you identify the source of your belief if you feel you don't measure up?
3. **Read James 4:1-3 and Discuss:** Think about one of your family relationships where there is tension or distance or quarreling.
 - a. What makes you strive in that relationship?
 - b. What lies at the core of the distance or disappointment you feel with a significant family relationship? (ex: desire to be loved, respected, be the hero?)
4. **Read Galatians 1:10 and Discuss:** This passage tell us that our striving for approval is contradictory to our position as followers of Christ.
 - a. Have you ever experienced a sense of striving out of a desire to please people? (Perhaps it's your kids, your own parents, or other parents you compare yourself to.)
 - b. Have you ever tied your worth, value, or significance to your performance as a parent?
5. **Read John 15:4-5 and Discuss:** What do you think it means to remain in Jesus when it comes to our parenting? What "fruit" do you think remaining in Him will produce in our lives?
6. What is 1 tangible difference you would see in your life if you lived FROM the love of God instead of FOR the approval of others?

God desires us
to live FROM His love instead
of FOR the approval of others.

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TRY THIS

Spend some quiet moments in reflection. Perhaps God wants to speak to you about a current family situation; perhaps He will prompt you to a relationship that He wants to restore; or perhaps He wants to give you a picture of what is possible for your family. "Lord, we know that family is your design, and that you desire us to live as an overflow of your love for us. We confess our tendency to live out of our desire for approval or to please people. Speak to us now – what do you want us to know? Give us the courage and faith to respond as you call us to. Amen."

Bringing Down the House

Week 1 | Real and Ideal

■ BOTTOM LINE

All of us have an idea of what the “perfect” family should look like, though none of us grew up in a perfect family. And no matter how much we love our family, we experienced part of their brokenness and experienced brokenness ourselves. We can either hold God’s standard for family or diminish it to match our current reality.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

We are designed to hold the IDEAL and what’s REAL in tension. Let’s work to gain an understanding of how to live the way God has called us to live with our families, as well as the power of embracing a necessary tension that moves us closer to God’s best for our lives.

■ SCRIPTURE

John 1:14 & 17; Colossians 3:18-21; Ephesians 6:1-2; Matthew 5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share about a time when you had specific expectations for how something would go with your family, but the reality you experienced was entirely different. (could be humorous or serious, could be your childhood or you as a parent, for example)
2. Most families sense there is a gap between current reality and where we want to be. Is that true for you? Why or why not?
3. When we’re living in that gap between what’s REAL and what is IDEAL, it’s easy to adjust the standard to make us feel better about our relationship with our spouse, our kids, our in-laws, and our own parents. Have you ever done that?
4. **Read John 1:14 & John 1:17.** What two words do these verses both share that Jesus embodies?
5. When there is a gap between what’s REAL and IDEAL, God calls us to embrace the fullness of Jesus’ truth and grace. Jesus constantly pointed people in the direction of what seemed to be an unattainable ideal, and yet never condemned them when they fell short. **Read and discuss the following verses:**
 - a. Colossians 3:18-21: Ignore the potential for arguments about semantics, just ask yourself these questions. Do I always love, honor, and respect my spouse? Am I ever harsh with my kids? Do I embitter my family members?
 - b. Ephesians 6:1-2: Do I honor my parents?
 - c. Matthew 5: Jesus redefined murder and adultery in ways that make all of us guilty. But He didn’t condemn us; He died for us. Is it hard for you to live in the tension of reaching for the ideal but also knowing we can’t ever fully reach it this side of heaven?
6. Has there been a time when you experienced the REAL vs IDEAL gap, and you chose to risk the relationship by extending truth and/or grace? What was the outcome?
7. What is one family relationship that you have “settled” with? (In essence, you’ve come to believe it can’t or won’t change, so you’ve accepted the current reality as final, maybe even stopped trying to improve it.) Are you willing to risk the relationship for the sake of God’s best and abundant life for us and our family?
8. Consider the idea of “progress over perfection” when it comes to your family relationships. How does this make you feel?

When there is a gap between what’s REAL and IDEAL, God calls us to embrace the fullness of Jesus’ truth and grace.

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TRY THIS

Spend some quiet moments in reflection. Perhaps God wants to speak to you a current family situation; perhaps He will prompt you to a relationship that He wants to restore; or perhaps He wants to give you a picture of what is possible for your family. “Lord, we know that family is your design, and that you desire families to reflect the love and care for one another that you have for your children. We confess how hard it can be for us to live in the tension of what is ideal vs what is real. Our desire is to embody both grace and truth like Jesus did and still does for us. Speak to us now – what do you want us to know? Give us the courage and faith to respond as you call us to. Amen.”