

## CREW Bible Study

### Youth XP3 Message Series – FAMILY MATTERS – Week 1

- **BOTTOM LINE:** When it comes to your faith and your family, love matters most.
- **GOAL:** To help students understand that following Jesus' command to love our neighbor as ourselves includes their family.
- **SCRIPTURE:**
  - John, chapter 13, verses 19-21: *"I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."* After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, *"Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."* – John 13:18-21
  - *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* – John 13:34-35
  - *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.* – 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

#### MESSAGE

What comes to mind when you hear the word, "family"? What image do you see or what emotions do you feel?

Maybe for you, "family" brings some good things to mind. Family dinners, family road trips, family game night.

Or maybe it's the exact opposite. Maybe you hear "family" and think:

- Frustration, because your stepbrother constantly criticizes you.
- Annoyance, because your parents are super strict about everything you do.
- Chaos, because everyone is always fighting with each other.
- Lonely, because there's so many things going on and it seems no one has time for you.

It's ok to be honest. Maybe it's a bit of both – the good and the bad. If any or all of these are true, you're not alone. On the spectrum of awesome to awful, family can be all over the place depending on the day and time. Things can be awesome one minute and awful the next.

Every family is unique and every family looks different. Some of you live with your Mom and Dad. Some of you live with step-parents or grandparents. No family looks the same or acts the same. But every family has one thing in common. Family is complicated.....at least sometimes. Every person in your family has a distinct personality with certain preferences, needs and ways of communicating. When you put a bunch of different personalities under the same roof – family or not, things can get difficult. It can be a recipe for disaster. Have you had a disaster of a day in your family? Maybe it lasted way longer than just a day?

When we have those disaster days, or weeks, or months or longer, it's human nature to find a way to try and deal with it all. To get through, each person tends to settle into a role in the family. Think of it as your way of making your family situation work. You get a role, you play that role, and it keeps things somewhat predictable and manageable. For example.....

- You may be the **mediator** in your family. You're always trying to keep the peace and make everyone happy.
- You may be the **avoider**. You keep your head down, keep your mouth shut, and mind your own business, thinking that eventually all of the tension will go away.
- You may be the **instigator**. Every time you see something going wrong, you get in the mix of it, you give your opinion, and let everyone know what they should do.
- You may be the **rule follower**. You avoid trouble and for the most part, do what you're supposed to do because that's what you're supposed to do.
- You may be the **comedian**. You turn almost any situation – positive or negative – into a joke.

Do you see yourself in this list? What's your role in your family? Is it one of these listed here? Or something else?

Sometimes this role is influenced by where you are in the order of siblings. Is that the case for you? Can you identify which roles your siblings and other family members play?

Now, here's another question for you – does faith influence the roles you take on? Maybe faith has been a part of your family for a while, but when you think about your family and you look at the ways your family interacts, you're not sure it's working. God is talked about, you say a prayer at the dinner table, maybe you go to worship, but the arguments and tension in your house are still there. If you say, "yes", you're not alone in this either.

Although Jesus and his disciples were not technically "family", they spent so much time together, they really were like a family. Each of them surely had a distinct personality with certain preferences, needs and ways of communicating. And they probably had their days when no one got along, days of disaster. Jesus actually predicted disaster. He knew it would happen, and he mentions it during what

would be his last meal with them. Listen to what Jesus says here in John, chapter 13, verses 19-21:

*"I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."*

Jesus predicts that one of them would soon betray him and in addition, tells Peter in front of everyone, that Peter would deny his friendship with Jesus all together. That's disaster for sure. But Jesus gives them a heads up on how to handle disaster. Listen to what he says just a bit later in John chapter 13, verses 34-35:

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

Throughout his time with them, Jesus had shown the disciples how to love people. He showed them how he humbled himself before others to put them first. He showed them how to be of service to others and do things for them. He chose to honor others even when it was confusing or strange or complicated or awkward. And he tells them, "See what I did? You do the same."

Jesus compiles all of this into one word that is easy to remember: Love. We are to love and show love to our friends, our teachers, our teammates, even strangers. And yes, our own family.

- In the middle of betrayal in a sibling rivalry? Love.
- In the middle of unfairness over screen time? Love.
- In the middle of a misunderstanding about what your mom said? Love.

Jesus knew this: Demonstrating love, especially in these difficult and disastrous days changes you. It makes you more like Christ, and that can be a goal for you. God wants to use your family – the good and the bad – as something that grows your ability to love. Why? Because love is what matters most as you become the best version of yourself. It's what Jesus says is the Greatest Commandment, to love God and love others.

So, what does it look like to love in the middle of complicated and even disastrous family situations? The apostle Paul wrote about love many years later in a letter to the early followers of Jesus in the town of Corinth. Listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, verses 4-7:

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

Trying to love this way might seem incredibly overwhelming. So, here's a good way to start. Which one of these applications of love stands out to you right now? Which one do you need to focus on bringing into your family at this moment, today?

- Kindness?
- Patience?
- Being slow to anger?
- Keeping no record of wrongs?

These things don't make you a doormat, they allow you to be a demonstration for God to those around you. Today, pick one of these things, and ask God to give you the power to start demonstrating it with your family throughout this week.

- It could mean that you start being more patient with your parents when they ask you to do something you don't want to do.
- It could mean being more kind to your siblings, or step-siblings, when they drive you crazy.
- It could mean celebrating your siblings when good things happen in their life instead of trying to tear them down to make yourself look and feel better.
- It could mean not being rude to your mom, or controlling your temper with your dad.

Family is complicated, but imagine if your faith could actually grow because of your family? And imagine if your family could grow because of your faith? That *is* possible. Just love.

### **FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Pull up a GIF or meme that best describes how you feel about your family right now. Describe why you picked the one you did.
2. Think back to elementary school, maybe 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade. What did your relationship with your family look like then? What has changed since then?
3. As we manage life within our families, each one of us tends to take on a role. In your family, which of these roles do you tend to play? Which do your family members play?
  - a. You may be the **mediator** in your family. You're always trying to keep the peace and make everyone happy.
  - b. You may be the **avoider**. You keep your head down, keep your mouth shut, and mind your own business, thinking that eventually all of the tension will go away.
  - c. You may be the **instigator**. Every time you see something going wrong, you get in the mix of it, you give your opinion, and let everyone know what they should do.

- d. You may be the **rule follower**. You avoid trouble and for the most part, do what you're supposed to do because that's what you're supposed to do.
  - e. You may be the **comedian**. You turn almost any situation – positive or negative – into a joke.
4. Quarantine during COVID affected how all of us see our family. If you could rewrite that experience, what would you want to do differently?
  5. Sometimes unrealistic expectations of our family get in the way. How are your expectations of your friends different from your expectations of your family?
  6. On a scale of easy to awkward, what is it like to talk about faith in your family? Describe it in one word.
  7. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Which one of these aspects of love would benefit your family the most?
  8. Today, identify one aspect of love that you can focus on to bring love into your life within your family. Each day, ask God to show you how to apply this to your relationships with the members of your family.