

“THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY (#2): A FAMILY IS...”

(Psalm 133:1-3)

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[PROP NEEDED: *Leave It to Beaver* Opening Clip

[Cornerstone U.M.C.; 9-15-24]

--I--

1. **[WATCH TITLE VIDEO from "*Leave it to Beaver*" TV Series (Total Time: 0:30)]**
Some of us are too young to have seen it live, but from 1957-1963, this popular weekly TV show invited viewers into the Cleaver home to experience what was considered to be the ordinary life of a “typical” American family of that time.

A--Now, I not going to ask those of you who were raising families back then to identify yourself, but if I *were* to ask if this show *truly* reflected what typical American family life was like back then, I'm guessing most of you would say... "*Absolutely NOT!*"

B--Out of curiosity, do you know what became of the main actors from this picture-perfect TV family?

1--HUGH BEAUMONT (Ward, the Husband & Father) fought a losing battle with alcohol and died of a heart attack in 1982.

2--BARBARA BILLINGSLEY (Judy, the Wife & Mother) struggled through severe bouts of depression before a successful marriage and her death in 2010.

3--TONY DOW (Wally, the Older Brother) became hooked on drugs and suffered from clinical depression throughout the 1960s and 70s. By the 1980s he overcame them, was married several times, and died of liver cancer in 2022.

4--JERRY MATHERS (who played the “Beaver”) is the only main actor still alive
(a) He fell into public obscurity for a while until attempting a comeback in a 1980s movie and sitcom about a grown up “Beaver.”
(b) But these failed to reinvigorate his flagging career, and even in them, he played a divorced, single father having trouble making ends meet trying to raise his two children by himself. ¹

C--My point is that while this show made for good humorous TV drama, its stereotype reflected an image of “family” that most Americans (including the actors who played them) simply *couldn't* live up to either then or today because it just *wasn't* realistic.

2. So, if this show isn't a reflection of what a successful family looks like, then what is? What DOES it take to have and be a successful (in this case... *Christian*) family in today's world? And what does that mean in the first place?

A--Does being a "Christian family" mean that everyone attends weekly worship together? Or a family that always prays and reads the Bible together? Or goes on mission trips together? Or that they are "perfect angels" towards each other *all the time*?

B--Well, while it certainly can *include* these things, a successful *Christian* family is NOT necessarily *defined* by them. So, what *does* define this kind of family?

--II--

3. Well, today we're continuing a series I began last week simply called "*The Christian Family*" in which we're discussing biblical insights which can create and sustain healthy relationships in building strong families of faith that are sources of joy & renewal in life.

A--And I believe today's scripture reading from Psalm 133:1-3 shares a description of what that kind of family looks like. Listen to what it says...

*"1 Look at how good and pleasing it is when families live together as one!
2 It is like expensive oil poured over the head, running down onto the beard -- Aaron's beard! -- which extended over the collar of his robes. 3 It is like the dew on Mount Hermon streaming down onto the mountains of Zion, because it is there that the Lord has commanded the blessing: everlasting life."*

This is the Word of God for all people. **Thanks be to God** [PRAYER]

B--Now, I don't know about you, but while I love my family members, I must confess that these words do NOT always describe either the family I was *raised in*, the family Trish and I *raised* with our daughter Jennifer, or even our family life *today*!

1--It wasn't (and is not) always filled with "*good[ness]... pleasant[ness]*," and "*blessedness*."

2--The refreshing, joyful Verse 2 metaphor of "*oil poured over the head, running down the beard*" was (and is) not always an accurate reflection of what "*Germano family life*" was and is -- and I doubt that any of you would say that things like this ALWAYS describe *your* family either!

C--Yet, as I mentioned earlier, I believe that being a successful Christian a family is about *more* than simply the living out a "*Leave it to (Christian) Beaver*" picture-perfect existence, whether it's from an idealized 1950s TV show, or from the Bible itself!

D--Instead, today's scripture verses were written to be read and interpreted as *aspirational* -- not necessarily as a reflection of what always IS, but a vision of an *ideal*... of what we are aspiring TO BECOME!

4. You know, it's been said that "*home is where the heart is*." And that means that one way to define "family" is to say it is simply "*the people who have our heart*."

A--If so, then when we speak of a successful *Christian* family, what we're really talking about is NOT just a collection of *individuals* who've given their *personal* hearts to Jesus (that's important, too), but to how a family have chosen to give their *collective* heart to Jesus as Savior of *their family!*

B--And this is true whether we're biologically kin or not. As Maya Angelou once explained, "*Family isn't always blood, it's the people in your life who want you in theirs: the ones who accept you for who you are, the ones who would do anything to see you smile and who love you no matter what.*" ²

C--Christian family, you see, are the people in our lives who see each other as *gifts* from God ³ -- people who make fellowship with God and with God's people a *priority* whenever possible (which is why, after all, the church itself is often called the "family of God").

5. So, while it's true that -- in the words of Christian theologian Michael Novak -- "*To become a family in today's world is nothing less than an act of courage,*" nevertheless a family who gives their *collective* heart to Jesus possesses something that other families don't:... the power and presence of GOD to get them through *any* situation/circumstance.

A--Now, that doesn't mean that we won't experience struggles or times when we don't always get along with each other. It doesn't mean we'll always *agree* with each other.

B--But it DOES mean that we won't have to struggle to be strong family all by ourselves, and that -- individually and collectively -- we together decide to trust *God* to help us every step of the way.

1--And when we do this, then THAT provides the "*oneness*" spoken about in Verse 1 -- a reference to being "on the same spiritual page" together.

2--It's the "*oil poured over the head, running down the beard*" talked about in Verse 2 -- a metaphor for relational, emotional and physical healing.

3--It's what Verse 3 calls the "*dew on Mt. Hermon, streaming down onto the mountains of Zion,*" and also the "*blessing*" that provides "*everlasting life*" -- again, all references to sources of refreshment, joy, and renewal in *this* life.

--III--

5. So, who is YOUR family? (remember that it can include people who aren't necessarily your biological kin!). Whoever it is, and however you define *yours*... has your family given its *collective* heart to Jesus as its Savior and Lord?

A--If not, then today's a great day to do that -- to ask him to be "Lord" over not only your individual *personal* life, but also over your *family's* life together

B--You see, if we're going to be successful as a family in today's world, then we're going to need help from *outside* ourselves -- and Jesus is the one who can do that.

C--...For the bottom line in all of this (in the words of today's title) is that "*A Family Is...*" -- a *CHRISTIAN* family is -- JESUS in our hearts and lives together.

6. Today I want to wrap up a little differently...

A--For those of you HERE IN-PERSON, if you are willing to commit your family collectively to Jesus as Lord of your family, then I want to invite you and your whole family to come forward to the altar area and join hands during the closing hymn.

B--For those of you worshipping ONLINE, if you're willing to do this, I want you to join hands with any family members who are worshipping with you in your worship space.

C--If you're worshipping alone (whether in-person or online) but want to do this, simply physically or mentally come forward alone symbolically *on behalf of* your family.

D--And after we finish singing, I'll offer a prayer for all of us who are committed to this...

7. [SUGGESTED CLOSING HYMN: UMH#445, *Happy the Home*]

8. [PRAYER OF CONSECRATION: For not only individuals but also *families* to commit their collective hearts to Jesus as LORD of their family...]

ENDNOTES:

¹ See generally, <https://screenrant.com/leave-it-to-beaver-cast-actors-still-alive/>

² <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/10683961-family-isn-t-always-blood-it-s-the-people-in-your-life>

³ In the words of Bishop Desmond Tutu, "*You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them.*" (<https://www.betterworld.net/quotes/family-quotes.htm>). After all, it was God who *originated* the idea of "family" to begin with (Read Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:7, 18-25) and it is GOD who calls US into HIS family as His children (Read Revelation 21:7).