We’re starting a series about the modern family - what the Bible has to say and what wisdom God has spoken about your family, especially about parenting.

When I talk about preaching on the topic of family, or family values, most “church” people anticipate one of two things...

**ONE**, What we call “family values” on kind of a political scale - issues surrounding marriage, abortion, entertainment, etc.

The problem with that is we often wind up putting our focus on “them.” We preach at the world outside the church and ignore our own issues.

**TWO**, We want to talk about rules, roles, and responsibilities.

*Should we spank our kids?*

*Who should “bring home the bacon?”*

*Who gets to be the leader of the house?*

And I fear that when we reduce what the Bible says about family down to these kinds of issues, we miss the BIGGEST issue of all.

What makes a healthy, growing, thriving family is far more than a list of rules, or people fulfilling the correct “roles.”

In reality, you can follow the rules. You can divide up the roles correctly. You can know where you stand on all the family “issues,” but if you don’t establish a foundation of a loving connection, you’ll always struggle.

**The single most important family value is the forming of a deep relational connection with each other.**
In Genesis, when Adam and Eve (the first marriage, the first “family”, which established marriage and family as the primary institution on earth) sinned, God came looking for them, and they were hiding in shame.

**CONNECTION WAS BROKEN.**

Intimacy was gone.
Shame took over.
Adam and Eve went into hiding.

The connection issue got worse. One of their kids literally murdered another of their kids (Cain and Abel). *By the way, if one of your kids hasn't literally murdered another one, you're not doing as bad as you sometimes might feel.*

The rest of the Old Testament is all about the human attempt, with some guidance and oversight by God, to re-establish order on a disordered planet.

Rules (the commandments).
Roles (prophets, priests, kings).
Responsibilities (rituals).

By the time Jesus came, there was a strong sense of nationality, and a strong religious system, but something very important had been forgotten...

**Mark 12:28-34 NLT**

[28] One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

[29] Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ’Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. [30] And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ [31] The second is equally important: ’Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”

[32] The teacher of religious law replied, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. [33] And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbor as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law."
Realizing how much the man understood, Jesus said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

When you realize that life is more about loving God and other people than keeping rules, you’re really close to the kingdom of God. In other words, you “get” what the kingdom is all about, and what the law was intended to do to begin with.

Jesus was making one thing clear...

The single most important family value is the forming of a deep relational connection with each other.

Let me break this down. Jesus wanted us to understand some vital truths...

BIG TRUTH #1: Nothing matters more in this world than connecting with people.

And by the way, I’m talking about connecting instead of just “relationships,” because the truth is, you can be in a relationship with someone and not actually be connected.

Real connection is the sharing of souls. It’s the co-mingling of soul, spirit, and emotion.

It’s sharing dreams. Sharing fears. Sharing burdens.

It’s relating to God together, and relating to each other in moments of both pain and pleasure. It’s enjoying God’s blessing as a family unit and not just as an individual.

BIG TRUTH #2: Nothing powers connection better than love.

Jesus said, this is FIRST. Love God.
And this is SECOND. Love people.
Everything else will fall into place if you put love first.

Express love. Share love. Show love. Celebrate love. Do the loving thing. Be willing to get close. To get hurt. To be real. To put someone else’s needs before your own. To forgive. To give. To care. That’s all love, and love powers connection.
BIG TRUTH #3: There is no greater example of love than Jesus.

Jesus didn’t just preach that we should love. He didn’t simply assign the duty of love to his people to go and keep like a rule.

He set the example in living his life AS love.

God is love.
Jesus is God.
Jesus IS love, and demonstrated his love for us...

Romans 5:8 AMP
But God clearly shows and proves His own love for us, by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were sinners... Jesus yelled at us? Shamed us? Berated us?
No... while we were sinners, Jesus died for us.

Jesus saw our sin and went to the cross to redeem us from it.

That’s grace.
That’s love.

The secret to a healthy, thriving family is love rooted in truth and ready to show grace.

Maybe this is new to you. You’ve not known love or grace. But when you get to know Jesus, that’s what he’s all about.

Are you ready to join HIS forever family?