

August 18, 2006

Encouragement for Today

Principals 2-3

“Love the Ones You’re With”

Renee Swope, Proverbs 31 Speaker, Author and Executive Director of Communications

Key Verse:

1 John 4:11-12, “Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” (NIV)

Devotion:

When you’re with the ones you love, do you love the ones you’re with? I am embarrassed to admit it, but there are times when I’m with my family, and my mind is somewhere else getting something done!

I realized this one night while we were all watching a movie. It looked like we were spending quality time together as a family. I was there *physically*, but I was returning phone calls and emails *mentally*. I glanced at the clock to see how many hours before bedtime when I could get some work done, and noticed the silhouette of my son’s face. I was struck by how grown up he looked. How quickly ten years had passed! It made me think, it won’t be long before he’s counting down the hours until I go to bed, so he can instant message or get on the phone with his friends. That’s when I recognized the gift of being *with* the ones I love and loving the ones I’m with, while they’re still with me.

Jesus knew His time with the ones He loved was limited. He valued the years He had here and was very intentional about loving each and every person He was with. Jesus didn’t see people’s requests for His attention or time as interruptions, but welcomed them as invitations.

I am a type-A, get-it-done, kind of girl. “Being” instead of “doing” is tough for me. The only hope I have is to take my struggle to God and ask Him to help me. He made me this way and He’s the only one who can make me more like Him. Through His Word, He’s challenged me to slow down and spend more time being *with* my husband and my children. He knows how easily I can allow my time with them to get crowded out by my need to “do” things. He has helped me to see them as the highest priorities in my life.

What about you? How often are you really *with* the ones you love...no agendas, no errands, no planning...just being? How often do you laugh together, watch movies together, or go out for ice cream?

There are a few things I do to help me cherish the time I have with the ones I love. First, I look into their faces and remember what they used to look like. That helps me grasp how quickly time passes. Second, I imagine a day they may not be here; the day they might live in another State with their own family; the day I will wait for them to call and tell me what they have been doing since we last talked. Third, I think back to what life was like without them. That jolts my memory, and makes me so grateful for the time God has given me with them.

And lastly, I remind myself daily that my tasks and “to do lists” will always be here, but the ones I love may not. My prayer is that you will join me in slowing down to be with the ones you love and love the ones you are *with*!

My prayer for today:

Lord, thank you for the people you have given me to love – even when they are hard to love, even when I feel like I don’t have enough time to enjoy them. Help me to slow down and see them through your eyes. Help me to see them as the greatest gifts I will ever be given. Remind me daily that the only thing that will last for eternity is my relationship with you and my relationships with others. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

Plan a date with someone you love (your child, spouse, parents or best friend).

Talk about the things and people they care about most. Really listen and enjoy them.

If you get distracted by things you need to do, imagine this is the last time you will be with them and make it your best ever!

Reflection Points:

Make a list of how you spend your time each day of an average week. Put a heart next to the time slots you spend enjoying and building relationships. Put an x next to the time slots you spend completing tasks. Is your life balanced when it comes to being with the ones you love and loving the ones you are with?

If not, ask the Lord to give you creative ways to cut back on “doing” and add more “being” and loving into your life!

Power Verses:

Psalm 90:12, “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (NIV)

Philippians 2:3, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (NIV)

Ephesians 5:1, “Be imitators, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love.” (NIV)

Additional Resources:

Mining for Gold in the Heart of Your Child Chart and CD/Tape by Renee Swope

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_miningGoldChart.htm

Capture His Heart, by Lysa TerKeurst

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_captureHis.htm

Building the Christian Family You Never Had by Mary DeMuth

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_buildingChrist.htm