



Love Dwells Richly in the Realigned Home

Learning to love those in our homes is a turning point if we are to realign the relationships we share with our family members.

- How deep is your love for family?
- Sibling rivalry is real in some households. How do we help families to come to terms with each other?

Matthew 14:22-33

'Lord, save me' is a guttural cry from Peter and it echoes in our hearts today. Are there experiences in the home that cause us to feel the need to implore the Lord to save us?

- Can the home become a destroyer of faith? If so, how do we live? How do we keep walking on the water in faith?

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

Psalms 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b

Romans 10:5-15

Matthew 14:22-33

- (UCJCI Preaching Themes – Sunday, August 13, 2023)

It is common knowledge that the home environment is a primary and fundamental building block for individual and family well-being. A supportive, loving, and nurturing home has profound and lasting effects on our physical, emotional, and psychological development, shaping our lives and influencing our engagement with the world. It is especially so in the case of Christian homes, where the life of the entire family and its individual members must be an expression of God's will, purpose, plan, values, and standards. In such homes, mutual love, compassion, forgiveness, respect, and unity can create a harmonious environment where everyone can thrive. In addition, the influences of a good Christian home can positively impact the life of future generations.

Christian homes aligned with God's intentions also have a ripple effect on the broader social environment. Among other things, they exemplify and practice high moral values and ethics, actively engage in the life of their community, participate in volunteer work, and contribute to charitable activities. In broad terms, they represent and spread God's light and love in our wanting world.

Unfortunately, the home can also be a place of selfishness, rivalry, discord, abuse, and neglect. Just like in the case of a positive home environment, the undesirable effects and harms induced in a dysfunctional and toxic home can last a lifetime and even beyond, both within and without.

Genesis chapter 37 provides a vivid illustration of trouble in the home in the form of parental favoritism and the ensuing sibling rivalry and its effects through the story of Joseph and his brothers.

Joseph is the favorite child of his father, Jacob, and receives a fancy, colorful coat (tunic). This favoritism and the extravagant gift trigger jealousy and resentment among Joseph's brothers, who become increasingly envious of him, especially after he shares dreams suggesting his future authority over them. Their jealousy leads to a conspiracy to get rid of their brother. They seize the opportunity when Joseph visits them on behalf of their father and sell him to a group of traders who take Joseph to Egypt as a slave. As an explanation of his disappearance the brothers deceive their father into believing that his favored son was killed by a wild animal. Jacob is devastated by the loss of his son and is consumed by grief. He mourns deeply and is unaware that his other sons are responsible for Joseph's disappearance.

This chapter highlights the dynamics of inconsiderate preference in affection, jealousy, competition, and the consequences arising from unaddressed and unresolved conflicts within a family.

To some degree we can understand Jacob's sentiments for Joseph. To be the last child born into the family and his parents advanced in age, Joseph became the baby. His parents, especially his father, showered him with special attention and favors, something his older siblings never experienced and eventually resented, especially after hearing the claims of the 'baby' of the family playing a divinely ordained importance in their lives!

Their resentment, annoyance, and anger, over time, led them to make decisions and take actions they much regretted afterward. At first, they were satisfied and felt justified, for seemingly, they restored the natural order of things. But their satisfaction was short-lived and turned into misery when they confronted the grief of their father and the impact of the void left by the absence of Joseph. Years of miserable coexistence followed, marked by a shared sense of guilt, shame, and deception. The brothers miscalculated the effects and consequences of their

actions, which sowed discord, mistrust, and anguish within the family.

Genesis chapter 37 teaches us the dangerous consequences of following our own head and heart instead of God's. The good news is that we can realign our minds and hearts with God's love which contribute to creating and sustaining healthy and harmonious family relationships and home environment.

In a realigned home, the relationships of family members, the decisions, and the actions all spring from a genuine love for God and each other. This love is the very essence of everything that follows. It is the motivating force and the enabling power to be and to do. Of course, we don't mean our limited, self-centered love but God's limitless, unselfish, unconditional, sacrificial love. The more this love finds space in us, the more we become realigned and can contribute to making a realigned home.

In such a home, as time goes by, relationships can grow healthier, stronger and deeper, as family members learn

- to navigate adversity together,
- to constructively address conflicts and seek resolution,
- to forgive and to forget,
- to be a source of strength when faced with challenges and difficulties,
- to be an inspiration and positive example for each other,
- to be grateful and appreciative,
- to practice generosity and service, and
- to grow deeper in faith and dedication to God.

But before anyone accuse us of being idealistic and unrealistic, we acknowledge the truth: there is no perfect home, not even a Christian one! A realigned home is not free from problems, conflicts, hurt, frustration, worry, anger, or sadness. It is not immune to the harmful effects caused by sin, which can reign or resurface in human nature.

Realigning ourselves and our homes with God's mind and heart is a continuous journey that requires our intention, effort, and ongoing reflection. Love can indeed dwell richly in a realigned home when consistently and sincerely pursued and practiced by every family member. It will not only have a multitude of positive impacts but will also bring glory to God!

(Rev. Otto Menko)

EAST END – GUN BAY UNITED CHURCHES' VBS

Mrs. Itza Bodden

The East End and Gun Bay United Churches had their combined VBS from July 24-28, 2023, at the East End Church Hall. It was a week full of joy where 20 children participated in the lessons, trivia, art and craft, and games. The theme of this year's VBS was **Food Truck Party**.

Rev. Rohan Forrester took charge of the devotion every day, followed by activities linked to the daily theme, led by Mrs. Itza

Bodden, Youth Worker of the Charge. Mr. Ednie McLean made a truck from foam. Each day the children could earn coins by actively participating in the activities. They could exchange these for the snacks of their choice at the end of the day.



The daily morning devotion led by Rev. Forrester



Arts and Crafts

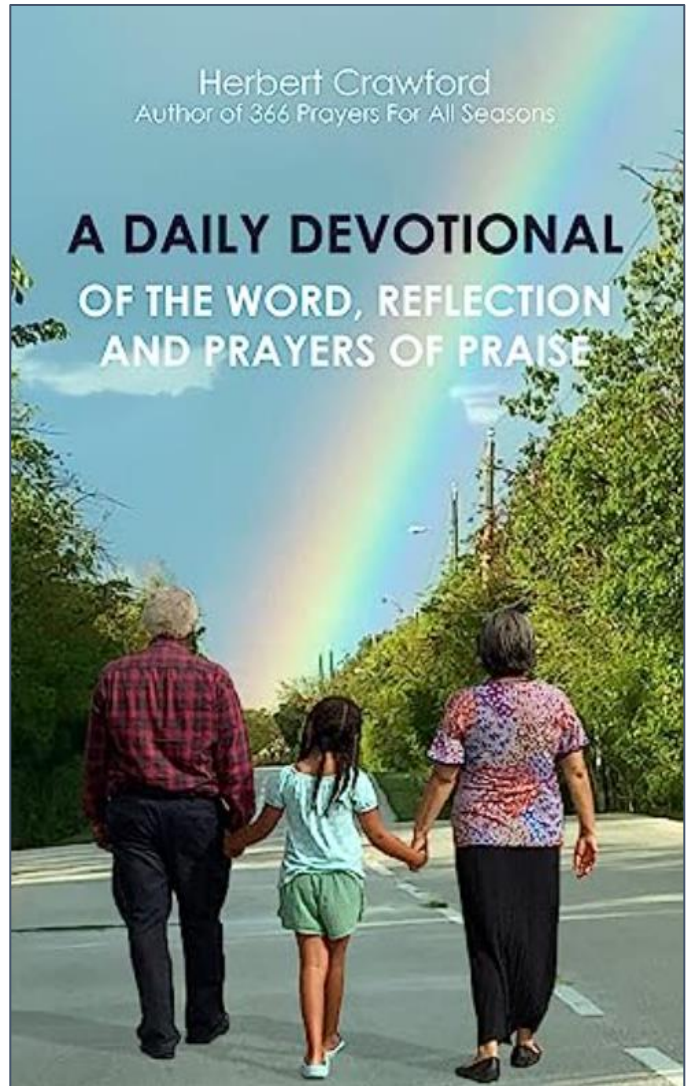


The Food Truck

The children thoroughly enjoyed the VBS. It was good listening to them shout out on the last day all the things they learned. For the closing activity, they had a piñata as a surprise.

The VBS received support from several parents who readily assisted where needed (registration, kitchen, art and craft, games, keeping order, finance, etc.). At the end of the VBS, each received a thank you token as an expression of appreciation for their contributions. The children's parents also received letters of invitation to attend with their young ones the Sunday morning worship service on August 06, 2023, at the East End United Church and collect their certificate of participation.





The book is available on Amazon.com

Remember in your prayers!

All those God has placed on your heart and those brought to your attention in some way. Please include in your prayers especially the family of the late Mr. McFarlane Conolly (EEUC), also Mr. Mike Bowerman and his wife Mary (EMUC), Rev. Joe Crawford and Rev. Harry Bodden.



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Rev. Otto Menko

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