



Empowering People to Change the World

The Wholehearted Family

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The Wholehearted Family: a tribute to mothers and fathers.

Today is Father's Day and last month we celebrated Mother's Day. I would like to take a break from the book of Revelation tonight and focus in on the role of fathers and mothers in our family.

By far, the most stretching and humbling job you will ever have women is being a wife and mother. Men, the most significant job, most stretching and humbling you will ever have is being a husband and father!

- Liz and I have been husband and wife for almost 31 years and have been father and mother for 28 of those years.
- We've been blessed with 7 children, ranging in age from 11 to 28; four of them are 21 or over and two are married. We have one grandchild.
- Three of our young adults have Bible degrees; two chose to go to Bible college overseas, and one has even done an archeological dig in Israel. We also have two young adults in secular colleges.
- We have lived in a tiny apartment in one of the largest cities in the world—Tokyo Japan. We have lived in the middle of a sugar cane field in Okinawa, Japan.
- We have lived in suburbia in Briargate, where we started the family business, a church, in our basement twenty years ago.
- We have had much and lacked a lot. We've never had any fancy vacations. All the money we've ever had was based on prayer, trusting in God's promises and calling, and my ability to generate it—from raising support as a missionary for ten years, to planting two churches.
- We believe profoundly in tithing 10% of our income, which means we give it to the church, and have tested God in His ability to provide for us.
- We drive older cars, have lots of dents, almost all have cracks in the windshields.
- We have had our children in private, public, and charter schools, but have chosen the majority of our time to home school.

- We have had to battle in prayer, seek wise counsel, and lots and lots of hard work to form wholehearted disciples of Jesus.
- The other morning, with most of our young adults and children at home with us, I asked them to share what they felt were the most important things we did as a family. Part of this message incorporated their input.

Before I begin, let me share my concern about giving such a message.

- 1) We are not perfect and we have made many mistakes. One of our young adults told us the other day that she wished we had valued her opinion more as she grew older. You are not going to hear about our dumber choices, that's for another time.
- 2) Most people get super sensitive and defensive in talking about their marriage and parenting and I don't mean to presume anything. I'm only going to share what we believe works in shepherding a strong family.
- 3) I'm talking about building a Christian family, a Jesus disciple family. I'm talking about building wholehearted disciples of Jesus. I'm not talking about how to get scholarships for your kids or have your family look like the All Star Family of Colorado Springs. There are other seminars on that.
- 4) Questioning oneself is hard. Questioning what the culture says and not following it is even harder. One of the hardest things we do, or rather don't do, is question conventional wisdom or what the culture says you're supposed to do. In the Holt family, we rarely look to the culture for any of our decisions. I hope I challenge you!

As Israel is coming into Canaan, Moses gives them the most important instructions they will ever have. These are the most powerful instructions God ever gave Israel on how the family is to be shepherded, developed, and built while entering a foreign culture—a culture that will oppose everything they believe in.

Deuteronomy 6:1

“Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess 2 that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’ 4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

- This is given to the fathers for how they are to conduct their family in the new land. The land of Canaan would be:
 - Different in their food.
 - Different in their schooling.
 - Different in their religion.
 - The peoples of Canaan practiced infanticide, worshipping their gods through child sacrifices. They worshipped idols made with human hands.

- But they are not just going to be another tribe in the land—they were sent to the land to “possess” it, not just settle in it. They were to occupy and multiply in the land.

How do we Build Wholehearted Families?

Maxim #1 Modeling. We first model Christ through a Wholehearted Marriage.

- If you're a single divorcee or widow/widower, then you yourself must model what you want your children to become. But if you're married, it involves both of you!
- Our children become most like us! Like it or lump it, it's true. They watch what you do more than listen to what you say.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson quote: "What you are speaks so loud, I can't hear what you're saying."
- We model what our children will become! We can't build wholehearted children without a wholehearted marriage. It all starts here.
- Modeling is the most important thing we do as mothers and fathers. It all starts with us.
- We must be wholehearted disciples first! It begins with mom and dad living the Jesus life at home.
- Wholehearted living, being vulnerable, loving Jesus is more caught than taught.
 - Men, this begins much of the time with us. If we are kind, our kids become kind; if we are loving our kids becoming loving.
 - If we are angry, our kids will model their lives around our anger.
- That begins with staying married even in difficulties. Time magazine, June 13, 2016, "New evidence keeps piling up that few things are as good for life, limb and liquidity as staying married. Karl Pillemer, a Cornell University gerontologist, who did an intensive survey of 700 elderly people found, 'Couples who have made it all the way later into life have found it to be a peak experience, a sublime experience to be together.'"
- Dr. Pillemer continues, "Everybody—100%-- said at one point that the long marriage was the best thing in their lives. But all of them also said either that marriage is hard or that it's really really hard!"

- As I say in my book, *The God-Wild Marriage*, when Ruth Bell Graham was asked if she ever considered divorce of Billy, she replied, “Divorce, no, but murder yes.”
- It’s hard but its also the most fulfilling institution ever given to man. All the research shows that people who stayed married are:
 - Financially more well off.
 - Physically in better shape.
 - Emotionally more stable.
 - Spiritually more fulfilled.
 - And so are their kids.
- Time magazine mentions an important point that I would like to address to all of our single young adults and those who are currently not married but hope to be: Drop the idea of finding a soulmate.
- Gary Chapman, the author of *The 5 Love Languages*, which has been on some version of the New York Time best-seller list for 8 straight years, says, “We have this mythological idea that we will find a soul mate and have these euphoric feelings forever. In fact, soul mates tend to be crafted, not found.”
- How do we craft a soul mate? Dr. Pillemer says by “Practice, practice, practice. In my research I found that these people never discussed divorce as an option. They had a mind-set that they would stay married. They regarded their partnership as less like buying a new car and more like learning to drive.”
- I go into more detail in my book that are available in the lobby. We have a few left... \$5 each.

Vs. 3

Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’

Maxim #2 Multiplying. We are called to multiply in the land.

- You are building Producers, not Consumers! Building a Wholehearted Family is about building men and women who will be effective, successful, and powerful in the land.
- If we are to possess the land, we must “multiply greatly” and take the land for the glory of God.
- This builds confidence and trust in God—they have to pray and think through what they’re doing.
- But notice that Israel was to “possess” the land! God wants us to possess the land. We are not fall in line with the culture but to build children who can possess the land.
- Moses is saying if you will observe the commands of the Lord, God will open doors and empower you to possess the land.
- I believe we are to build kids that can reign in life.

Romans 5:17

For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

- My son Daniel said to us, “You instilled entrepreneurship into us.” We have encouraged our kids to “think outside the box” and not take what they hear on TV or movies, or school as the truth. Kids need to be taught to think for themselves:
 - We have tried to teach them to think outside the box using the Bible and history as a guide.
 - I remember Daniel coming home talking about what he was being told about the Puritans in his PPCC class. I told him to look it up historically and see if that was accurate or skewed with a bias.

- We've told our kids to start their own businesses:
 - Anna had a dried flower card business.
 - Daniel had chickens and chain sawed for people.
 - Samuel has taught piano lessons.
 - But the most famous business in our family history was Deborah, who made edible stationary! Chocolate and avocado edible paper stationary.
- Train your kids to think outside the box and don't just do what everyone else does—you're training them to be creative, innovative, and intentional.
- Don't build young adults that are, as Liz says, "institutionally dependent."
- Main point→ Raise entrepreneurs not employees. Train them not to be dependent on other people's resources but to develop their own. Train your kids to be scrappy and innovative. Don't give them everything.

Vs. 4

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.”

Maxim #3 Missional. Our mission is to Build and Shepherd our children's Heart to Love God with their Whole heart!

- This is the most counter cultural message of all! We are building disciples who love God with their heart, their soul, and their strength.
- Our main mission is not:
 - To get our kids in the best college.
 - To get our kids to have the highest GPA or ACT score.
 - To have our kids wear the best designer jeans or drive a cool car.
 - It is not to be the star quarterback on the football team.
 - Or be Homecoming Queen.
 - Our mission is to build men and women who love God with all of their heart!
- We are branding their hearts to love God! That was always our highest goal.

- For the Holt's that meant:
 - We evaluated each child's schooling individually to fit their needs and strengths.
 - We limited the intake of media.
 - This meant we were careful about "appetites" meaning that if you give a child an appetite for media, they will want more and more.
 - We limited their friendships and the influence of neighborhood and school friends.

- We exposed our children to mission opportunities with all of them going on mission trips.

- We had our children involved in youth group and serving in children's ministry and worship ministry—we wanted them to learn to lead by learning to follow and be a part of mission driven groups.

- Have your kids in 24 Hour War Room, Springs Initiative, and all the missional things you are involved in.

Developing the Wholehearted Family involves:

- 1) Modeling...mom and dad loving God and each other.
- 2) Multiplying...training entrepreneurs not employees.
- 3) Missional...shepherding their hearts to love God.

Maxim #4 Mobilizing. We must actively, attentively, intentionally train and coach our children to love God.

Vs. 7

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

- **We mobilize by training and coaching—a set time and place.**

- It's one thing to have a mission but it's entirely, altogether another to equip your kids to live it.

- We are in worship here at The Road about 2 hours out of 168 hours in a week! This is not going to be the main place for equipping our children to love God.
- For many of you, your children are in school 8 hours a day, that translates into 40 hours a week. If you include sports etc. it's more like 50-60 hours of influence per week. They sleep about 56 hours per week.
- If the culture gets our kids 50 hours a week who's going to have the greater influence? You don't have to be rocket scientist to understand that 50 hours of influence per week over 12 years is a lot of influence from the culture. I figured it out...
 - The average Christian child goes to school 8 hours a day and then does some kind of extra curricula for 2 hours, that's 10 hours a day coming out to 50 hours of influence per week.
 - That computes to conservatively 15,000 hours of influence and that's not including college!
 - Our passage was given because it was the same in the time of Moses. He knew, God knew that Israel would not be able to take the land if they became like the land.
 - We cannot possess the land, influence the culture, if we are just like the culture.
 - We must be counter-cultural and that is harder, way harder.
 - I like to fly fish and let me tell you, walking against a strong current in the middle of a river can be hard and even dangerous.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

- Three things: “Teach”—Formal training; “Talk”—Informal training; and “walk”—Non formal training.

- When we asked our grown adult children what was the most significant thing we did as a family to build our family and they called it the “Group Quiet Time.”
- Liz always has had formal Bible study time, almost every day with our kids.
 - Liz will tell you that this is by far the most important thing she has given our children—training by going through the Bible daily.
 - They have covered almost every book of the Bible together.
 - It’s our habit in the Holt family—time in the Word.
- We’ve never assumed that anyone was going to equip our kids! No one but us—youth and children’s ministry was supplemental but the main equipping had to come from our home.
- Notice that God’s Word is so practical here: Formal training, Informal training, and Non-formal training. It’s not just a formal time but also the informal times.
- I believe every family needs:
 - A Formal Training time—just start with reading the Bible and talking about it.
 - Use our PB&J bookmark as a family.
 - Pray over things happening in their lives.
 - Age appropriate—Bible stories with pictures to the Bible itself.
- You also need it be a regular part of your informal and non-formal times:
 - Around the dinner table-eating together.
 - Sitting around the fire pit.
 - Driving to baseball or piano or soccer practices.
 - Actually this can be some of the most powerful times in our parenting.
 - Sometimes you have to be ready to stay up late at night.