

This week guest speaker Dr. Graham Twelftree delivers Part 3 of the series "Living the Life You've Always Wanted" with the Father's Day message entitled "How To Grow a Healthy Family."

If you're married and have kids, you can relate to the story of a child screaming at the top of his lungs, in need of a diaper change, and causing a ruckus in the middle of the grocery store. If you've had such an experience, you know that being a parent is a tough job. There's a constant demand for attention, as well as the frustrations of children that don't listen. As a parent, you want your family to be strong, happy, and healthy, but how do you accomplish that? Graham gives us six things that will help our families to thrive.

First, you need to provide a secure atmosphere. This is more than just physical security. Your children need to know that they are loved. Do you give them hugs and other meaningful touches? Do they believe that your marriage is secure? Do they see you as reliable and always there for them?

Second, resolve financial issues quickly. Poor financial habits can quickly become a source of trouble in the family. Graham tells how the finances of families who begin to tithe a tenth of their income to the local church actually improve. By putting God first, having a budget, and setting realistic financial goals, you can clear up money problems and get back on solid footing.

Third, accept one another. Are you accepting of family members or do you tend to be sullen or grumpy? Say "I love you" to your spouse and kids whenever you can. Give them a hug or kiss to show your affection. Spend time with them by going to their special events (i.e., sporting events, dance recitals, etc.) and helping them with homework.

Fourth, spend quality time together communicating. The average person uses 10,000 words a day. Often a husband will get home from work in the evening having already used his quota, while his wife still has 9,998 to go. One marriage expert says a man should give his wife 15 hours a week of undivided attention. This could apply to your children as well. By getting rid of the distractions and focusing on your family, you can greatly improve how well your family communicates and gets along.

Fifth, commit to each other. Just as God said in Joshua 1:5, "I will not abandon you or leave you alone," you need to have that same commitment to your family. Be steady and faithful in the tough times; let them see that you aren't going anywhere. When they see how committed you are to their well being, they'll feel more secure and be better equipped to cope with the challenges of life.

Finally, share your spiritual values with your family. Talk about God, Jesus, heaven, hell, and what you believe about them. Encourage your family's pursuit of truth and make your faith a central part of family life. When they see how important your relationship with Jesus is, they'll be more likely to want their own relationship with Him.

A happy, healthy family life doesn't just happen. It takes work, planning, attention, and heart. Try keeping these things in mind as you share this journey of life with your loved ones and see what fruits come from it. How can you implement these six things this week to grow your own healthy family?