

# HOW TO HAVE A HEALTHY FAMILY

## LUKE 4:38-39

Deborah Kemp's ordeal began when she rolled her car up to the self-service pumps. Her six year-old daughter, Ashley, was asleep in the backseat when Deb walked around her car to fill it up with gasoline. Suddenly, a strange man climbed into the driver's seat of her vehicle. He was trying to steal her automobile...

This 34 year-old mom, said later, "I didn't try to be a hero. I was just concerned about my baby... that was part of me in that car." As the man drove off in her car, Debbie grabbed the door with one hand, and with her other hand she reached through the window and gripped the steering wheel. The thief drove several blocks dragging Deb's knees across the rough asphalt.

Drawing upon a hidden reservoir of strength Deborah was able to hang on, and as the car was still moving she managed to pull the thief out of the vehicle.

When the man hit the ground Deborah grabbed her Club, the anti-theft device she kept under the seat, and started belting the bad guy. Witnesses say he was apologizing and begging her to stop as she *clubbed him* with the *Club*. In the end, little Ashley walked away unharmed. Deb tore her pants and bloodied her knees. While the thief suffered two broken legs, and severe head injuries... *serves him right*. One thing is for sure, Deborah Kemp is one mom who'll **fight for her family!**

I believe to have a healthy family in our modern world parents need to be willing to put up a fight! Christian families today are under attack. All kinds of forces are trying to break up the family. Thieves are everywhere, hoping to steal your family's togetherness and unity. **You've got to take a strong stand!**

Years ago a Chicago law firm launched a billboard picturing a scantily-clad woman on one side and the shirtless torso of a muscular guy on the other side. In between the message read, "Life's short. Get a divorce." The Law Firm's message was clear, marriage is more about personal happiness and sexual appetite, than commitment, and dedication, and faithfulness. One critic of the billboard wrote, "For those that think this is clever or humorous, how about placing a five-year old girl and an eight-year old boy in the background, clutching daddy as he leaves the house?"

The Chicago billboard was a blatant attack on marriage and the family. But it's just one snowflake in an avalanche. *The family is taking fire from all sides.*

Today, woke politicians and activist judges are trying to redefine the family... Motion pictures and television bombard us with messages that fidelity is old fashion, and

biblically-structured families no longer exist... and if by rare chance they do, they're not worth the effort it takes to keep them together, and make them strong...

Social media reinforces anti-family values like distrust, disrespect, sarcasm, ingratitude, rebellion, sexual promiscuity, etc... Don't expect algorithms used by Tic-Toc and Instagram - that target your kids - to turn around and teach them moral values and respect for parents. Modern media is hostile toward families.

As is the business world. You'd think corporations would encourage family-friendly work environments, but pro-family businesses are also on sharp decline.

Several years ago I read a sad quote from one of "*America's 100 Most Successful Executives*." He stated, "Reaching the level of business success I have requires total commitment. If your family is too demanding, get a new family. That's what I did." For your family's sake, I hope you're not working in a company managed by this man. *Hey, families today, both parents and children, are in a very real battle!*

It seems to me the only place in today's society a family can turn to for consistent support and encouragement is **the Church**. Marriage and family is God's idea, and it's God who supplies the strength and fortitude and wisdom to produce strong families.

Family should be done by the book! *Read God's Word for wisdom - rely on His Spirit for power - and His healing will rain down on parents and children alike.*

It's interesting, when God walked this earth in the person of His Son, Jesus was a **friend of the family**. He often saved marriages and families. In fact, I want us to look at one example this morning... in Luke 4...

Here we find a family that's fighting a fever, but Jesus turns it into a healthy family. This morning's message is entitled, "**How to have a Healthy Family**."

Let's read Luke 4:38-39... "**Now He** (meaning Jesus) **arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them.**"

Notice **four movements** in this story...

First, Jesus **comes over**. He's invited to Simon's house... Second, the family has a problem they **turn over** to Jesus... Third, Jesus **takes over** the situation. He *stands over* this sick woman... And fourth, Jesus drives out the fever and allows the family to **start over**.

Here's our outline: Jesus *comes over*. A problem gets *turned over*. Jesus *takes over*. And God's healing allows a whole family to *start over*. If you're a mom nurturing a sick

family, Jesus cares about **your** family, mom. Jesus wants your family to be a healthy family.

First, Jesus **comes over** to Simon's house. Verse 38 tells us, "**(Jesus) arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house.**" Now, don't miss this first, but vital point, Simon Peter brings Jesus home from church! For the Jews the synagogue was their place of worship. It was the equivalent of our Christian Church.

For Simon's family their first step toward health was to invite Jesus to return with them from the synagogue to their house. *And mom, if you want a healthy family your first step is to invite Jesus home from church.*

Let me assure you, *Jesus loves to get out of the synagogue and head home with people who invite Him!* While on earth, Jesus spent very little time in the Temple, or in a synagogue... in any house of worship.

The Lord spent most of His time among common-folk, interacting with them in the midst of daily life. He especially gravitated toward people's homes...

Jesus attended a party at Matthew's house... He ate at the home of Mary and Martha... He forgave a prostitute who came to see him at the home of a rabbi... He healed the paralytic in a house. The crowd lowered the man to Jesus through the roof... And recall Jairus, the Jewish official whose little girl was terminally ill, "**(he) begged (Jesus) to come to his house.**" Death would soon invade that house. Jesus was his only hope! A humble Jairus begged Jesus to come home with him... And remember what Jesus said after He had visited the home of Zacchaeus. "**Today salvation has come to this house.**" Here's some really good news: **our Lord Jesus loves to make house calls.**

Don't misunderstand I'm glad you made the effort to come to church today. In fact, church attendance has amazing benefits for families... You've probably heard quoted the Harvard University study that states, "**One out of every three marriages ends in divorce.**"

But the study also quotes a few statistics you haven't heard. Of couples married in a Christian church, odds decrease to "**one out of fifty.**" For those who come back to church after the wedding, and become regular attendees, the odds decrease to "**one out of 105.**"

But according to the Harvard study if you really want to decrease the odds of a divorce don't just attend church, but pray together on a regular basis, and read the Bible together with your spouse. Of the couples that not only go to church, but bring

Jesus home from church, “Only one out of 1,105 couples end up in a divorce.” The really healthy families don’t just go **to church** - they bring Jesus home **from church**.

But notice what happens when Jesus enters Simon’s home... The family **turns over** a problem to Jesus. Verse 38, “Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her.”

Coming to church helps a family, but just coming to church won’t insure a healthy family. At church Simon’s family looked like the pristine, perfect little family, but Jesus discovered a different story when they got home.

Simon’s mother-in-law had contracted an infection and was fighting off a fever. Dr. Luke calls it “a high fever.” The Greek word is “mega” - a “mega-fever.”

My wife use to be a home healthcare nurse. She witnessed situations where the infected patient was so severe the whole house reeked with a foul odor.

And this was the condition that Jesus found when He walked into Simon’s house. The mother-in-law’s infection had contaminated the entire household. There was no hiding this illness. The moment you walked into the house you knew there was a pungent problem.

*Did you hear about Charlie?* His neighbor raised prize-winning rabbits, and Charlie was always worried his dog would jump the fence and help himself to a snack. One day, Charlie found Rover with a dead rabbit in his mouth. *What would his neighbor do?*

Charlie plotted a cover-up... He cleaned the rabbit. Fluffed up the hair’s hair with a blow dryer. Then late that night he climbed over the fence and placed the dead rabbit back in its cage. He hoped his neighbor would assume that his rabbit died of natural causes.

But this next day Charlie had a knock on his door. It was his neighbor, “*Charlie, we’ve got a real problem.*” Charlie was wondering how his neighbor had found out. The rabbit owner continued, “*Yea, somebody dug up the dead rabbit I buried, cleaned it up, even fluffed its fur with a blow-dryer, and put it back in its cage... Charlie, we’ve got a real sick-o in the neighborhood!*”

And here’s the moral of the story, just because your family cleans up, and fluffs up to come to church... *it doesn’t mean it’s a healthy family.* Simon’s family came to church, but when Jesus *came over* to their house he found a problem they needed to **turn over** to Him...

I’m sure we all want to think we’re a part of a perfect family. Churches can even add to the pressure. “*How will folks treat us if they find out we’ve got a problem?*”

It's only natural to want people to think that you and your husband are another June and Ward Cleaver - the clean-cut couple who starred on the old black-and-white series, "*Leave it to Beaver.*" *If you ever saw it...*

But guess what? You're not a *Cleaver*, and your kid ain't the *Beaver*; instead you've got a *fever!*... If we want our family to be healed we have to admit we have a problem, and we need to recruit the Master's help.

Notice, when Jesus entered Simon's house no one tried to cover up the problem. In fact, we're told "**they made request of Him concerning her...**" In other words, everyone immediately took the problem to Jesus.

Friends, when it comes to God's healing *confession, admission, disclosure* is always the first step. How can a doctor treat a wound unless it's exposed to him? We need to *invite Jesus over*; then we need to **turn over** our fevers and infections and problems to the doctor.

If a doctor walked into a house and found an outbreak of infection - if she were a decent doc - before she did anything else, she'd treat the infection. And this is what happens when Jesus enters Simon's house. Jesus is *the Great Physician*, and He immediately moves to cure the infection and drive out the fever.

It reminds me of the magician who was asked to name his favorite trick. He said he really enjoyed sawing young ladies in half. He claimed he use to practice on his own family. The interviewer asked, "**Wow, you must have a large family?**" The magician answered, "**You're right. I've got eight half-sisters!**"

Sometimes we think we can cure family fevers on our own. We rely on our own tricks, and manipulations, and pressure tactics - and for a time maybe we can cut things up and reduce the fever. Like popping a few Tylenol, we can calm the fever down, and mask the symptoms, but more is needed if we want to drive out the infection and bring healing to the body.

And likewise with a family fever - *a summer vacation, a Christmas celebration, a big event like a wedding or even a memorial* - can draw a family together for a time, but it takes far more to permanently reunite a family. *It takes a work of God to heal a family fever.*

Notice in verse 39, Luke tells us Jesus "**rebuked the fever, and it left her.**" Remember *rebukes* were used to cast out demons. Evidently, Jesus saw the fever that threatened Simon's house as a direct result of spiritual warfare. The devil was at the root of the infection attacking this family. *And this is often the case today...*

The sickness in so many families is ultimately not due to *the media, or the school system, or an internet app, or some inconsiderate boss, or a television network, or a peer group, etc. etc.* - rather, I believe something far more sinister may be going on...

John 10:10 begins, “*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*” The devil is the thief who is out to steal your family’s joy and happiness. He is the person who ultimately wants to kill your family life, and destroy the love and unity that exist. *Thus, you can’t cure a sick family by yourself.*

Only Jesus has the power to overcome the spiritual forces that fight against our families. This is why we need to humble ourselves, and *turn it all over* to Him. John 10:10 ends with Jesus saying, “*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*” Jesus has the power to heal a sick family.

Did you hear about the woman who married “*Mr. Wright*”? *There was one problem*, she didn’t realize until after the wedding that his first name was “*Always.*” And “*Always Wright*” is both a masculine and feminine name. In fact, whoever deserves the name “*Always Wright*” will likely suffer from a fever in their family...

The key to healing is humility! Drop the facade. Stop the cover-up. Take off the mask. Admit your problem. *Turn over* your problem to Jesus and request His help.

Yet, there’s a third movement in our text... Jesus *comes over* to the house... they *turn over* their problem to Him... but unless they’re willing to let Jesus *take over*, He’ll be unable to administer the needed healing.

Jesus dealt with the fever in Simon’s house only after He was allowed to **take over** the situation.

Notice, the family member that was sick was the mother-in-law – and mothers-in-law are notorious for wanting to *take over* the family... Now, if you’re a mother-in-law I’m sure you’re the exception, but deserving or not, mothers-in-law have the reputation of being a little controlling. They like to run the show!

It’s been said, “*A mother-in-law is a woman who is never outspoken.*” Based on your own experience you can take the term “*outspoken*” as one word or two!

It’s my opinion Simon’s mother-in-law ran the show in this household. That’s why I think its no accident Luke gives us Jesus’ position, “*So He stood over her.*”

Granted, I’m just assuming Simon’s mother-in-law wore the pants in this house... *It may’ve been Simon... It could’ve been his wife... But it needed to be Jesus!*

If you know your Bible you'll acknowledge that God has established a definite order in the home... The husband should lead. The wife supports her husband. And the children respect their parent's authority...

But before any of that becomes a functioning reality, everyone in the family needs to line up under Jesus. The whole household needs to let Jesus *take over!*

One little girl summed up the balance of power in most families... She and her father were sitting on the couch when she asked, "Daddy, you're the boss of this house, right?" The proud papa replied, "Oh yes, sweetheart, I'm the boss of this house." But then his daughter burst his bubble. She said, "You're the boss because mommy put you in charge, huh Daddy?"

Hey, let me tell you who I think needs to be in charge of your family - *not the mother-in-law, or son-in-law, or daughter-in-law... the fever in your family won't be cured until you let Jesus take over!* Together as a family, we all need to decide to put Jesus in charge, let Him have full authority over life and relationships...

Once, a tired mother told her little boy to fetch the advertisement she'd had earlier. She had been browsing a catalogue, but the child had picked it up and misplaced it. He couldn't find mom's brochure.

The little boy shrugged his shoulders. He told his mom he had no idea where he'd put it... She growled, "Now, you had it last, so you better find it. And if you don't know where it is, then you'd better ask God to help you." A few minutes later the mother walked into her son's room, and overheard him giving God instructions, "God you go this way, and I'll go that way."

Here's our problem. *We also like to give God instructions*, especially when it comes to family sickness. I'm an expert at what Kathy does wrong, and how my kids and grandkids can do better, but I have a few blind spots when it comes to my own attitudes.

Hey, when I think I'm the boss I tend to *speak out*, my opinion seems all-important, but when I acknowledge that Jesus is in control over my family I put myself in a position where I need to *be spoken to*.

Jesus will drive out the fever from your family, and bring healing to the strained relationships once He's acknowledged as the head. If you want help with a family dysfunction don't *just turn over your fever* to Jesus, go one step further and *turn over your family!*

Finally, when Jesus *comes over* - and you *turn over* your problems - and He *takes over* control - then healing occurs and your family can **start over** afresh.

Notice, as soon as this mother-in-law is healed, she begins to serve! We read this story as a miracle of healing, but verse 39 records the real miracle. It's after the healing. **"Immediately she arose and served them."**

I heard one man comment, **"My mother-in-law was dangerously ill. Now she's dangerously well again."** But this was not the case with Simon's mother-in-law. To the contrary this lady was *healed to help!* She went from *being mega-sick* to *being a mighty servant*.

Let me suggest, contributing to every fever is an infection called **"selfishness."** Self-absorption, egotism, self-centeredness infects a family and drives up its fever. Rather than putting others first, and thinking and acting like a family, individual concerns begin to dominate. And if untreated this eventually kills any concern and love that existed among its members.

Perhaps you've been to shrinks and counselors, and been told your family problems are so complex and complicated... *and maybe they are, but maybe the fix is quite simple...* If everyone stopped acting so stinking selfish, and cared more about each other, don't you think your family life would improve? I'll bet it would.

It's interesting, our text doesn't tell us the means by which Jesus healed this woman's fever. We consider it a miracle - something that defies human explanation.

But in Mark's parallel account he adds a detail. **"So (Jesus) came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them."** When the Master touched the woman's hand and lifted her up, immediately the fever left her body.

This is similar to how Jesus healed the man with the withered hand. His hand was paralyzed. It was gnarled up in an arthritic ball, when Jesus commanded him, **"Stretch out your hand."** Of course, to do so was impossible. *How does anyone stretch out a deformed hand?* What Jesus was asking of him was unfeasible.

But he believed in the impossible and in the microsecond it took for the mental message to get sent from his brain to his hand the miracle occurred. It's said of the man, **"he stretched it out, and his hand was restored..."** Here's the life-giving point, **when the man chose to act on the words of Jesus healing took place.**

And I believe Peter's mother-in-law was healed in much the same way as Jesus healed the man with the withered hand... Fever racked her body. She was unable to

rise and serve even if she had wanted. But as Jesus reached out, and lifted her up, her faith rose up. She believed healing could happen... **then it did.**

Read this story backwards and you realize Jesus had a reason for this woman's healing. She was sick, but Jesus healed her so she could serve. When racked with a fever serving was the last thing on her mind, but the moment the mega-fever lifted serving was the first thing she did! *And she set a tone for the whole family.*

Perhaps there's a hidden purpose God has for your life - a way you can serve Him... but for years you've had this fever that's blinded you to the good things God can do, and wants you to do... It's only when we **bring Jesus home**, and **reveal our problem**, and **turn our life over to Him** that He causes our fever to break and we start to see what God intended for us all along.

When we read this story we often envision ourselves as Peter, or as Peter's wife, or as one of the other disciples who's witnessing all this... *but what if you and I are the mother-in-law?* The family member who actually needs to be healed. Here's why Jesus wants to heal you, so you can rise up and serve your family.

Imagine the impact of this mother-in-law after her healing. The woman who was *sick* is now a *servant*. Do you think her actions made a difference in the lives of the people around her.? They were in amazement. *The sickest among them was now the servant of all.*

And I've seen this same dynamic play out in many a family. Just one person in the fam receives the healing touch of Jesus, and it spreads to the whole family. A humbled wife, a willing child, a repentant dad believes God for a miracle, for a real healing - **and it happens.**

And the recipient starts doing the right thing, even if it's not easy - and it unleashes God's healing throughout the whole family... Think of it, today you could be the person to get the ball rolling in your family!

Let me close by reading an interesting letter... *"Larry and JoAnn were an ordinary couple, and like ordinary couples they struggled to make ends meet, and do the right things for their children, and they had their squabbles. Much of their conversation concerned what was wrong in their marriage and who was to blame. Until one day, the most extraordinary event took place.*

*"JoAnn, I've got a magic chest of drawers. Every time I open them, they're full of socks and underwear. I want to thank you for filling them up all these years."*

*JoAnn stared at her husband, "What do you want?"*

“Nothing. I just want you to know I appreciate those magic drawers.” This wasn’t the first time Larry had done something odd, so JoAnn pushed the incident out of her mind until a few days later.

*“JoAnn, thanks for recording the write check numbers in the ledger... JoAnn, that was a great dinner... JoAnn, the house looks spiffy...”*

JoAnn was growing worried. Where’s the sarcasm? The criticism? The biting remarks? JoAnn’s fears that something peculiar was happening to her husband were confirmed by 16 year-old Shelly, who complained, *“Dad’s gone bonkers, Mom. He just told me I looked nice. With all this makeup and sloppy clothes, he still said it. That’s not Dad, Mom. What’s wrong with him?”*

Whatever was wrong, Larry didn’t get over it. Day in and day out he continued to focus on the positive. Over the weeks that followed JoAnn grew more used to his unusual behavior, and occasionally even gave him a grudging, “thank you.”

She prided herself in taking it all in stride, until one day something so peculiar happened she became completely discombobulated: “I want you to take a break,” Larry said. “Take your hands off that frying pan. And get out of this kitchen. I’m washing the dishes.”

(Long, long pause)

“Thank you, Larry. Thank you very much.” JoAnn’s step was now a little lighter, her self-confidence was higher, and once in a while she even hummed. She didn’t experience blue moods much anymore.

That would’ve been the end of the story except one day another extraordinary event took place. This time it was JoAnn who spoke, “Larry, I want to thank you for going to work and providing for us all these years. I don’t think I’ve ever told you how much I appreciate it.”

Well, the story ends... Larry has never revealed the reason for his dramatic change of behavior no matter how hard JoAnn has pushed him for an answer, and so it will likely remain one of life’s mysteries... But it’s one I’m thankful to live with... You see, I’m JoAnn.”

JoAnn's letter highlights how a family can *start over* even if just one family member decides to do the right thing. Even if there are no assurances the right thing will be appreciated or reciprocated, still... *Is God calling you to be the person who takes that initiative?*

***How do you have a healthy family?*** Make four moves: Invite Jesus to **come over** to your house. Today, bring Him home from church!... **Turn over** your problems to Him. Even if it takes admitting you're not perfect... Let Him **take over** - not only your problems, but the direction of your family... And finally, **start over** by doing what He commands you to do even if you don't think you can or you're the only one. Trust Jesus to bring healing; then do what He asks you to do!

Hey, there's someone here today that would like to ride home with you after church! Take Jesus home with you, and you'll be amazed at the miracles He works.