

Text: Romans 12:12

Title: “The Family that Prays Together...”

HOME/HOPE VIDEO

Let's open our Bibles to Romans 12:9. This morning I'm talking about the importance of prayer in our marriages and families, and tonight we're going to practice the importance of prayer in our church as we gather for our Evening of Prayer and Praise at 5:30 in the Great Room. We will spend time praying for our Supreme Court as they are preparing their ruling on the definition of marriage. We'll also pray over individual needs, so if you have a prayer need, please fill out the prayer request card in your worship guide and put it in the offering basket at the end of the service. The Scriptures instruct us to gather to pray with God's people, so let's be faithful as we come together to praise God and pray to God together. Now I'll read Romans 12:9-12, then we're going to focus just on v.12. Read text.

Romans 12:12 - Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

ILLUSTRATION – This past week we've had devastating floods all across our state but one of the most tragic happened down in Wimberly where a giant wall of water came down the Blanco River and literally ripped massive homes off of their foundations. Several lost their lives and others are still missing. Even more tragically, we live in a culture today where not just houses where families live, but the families themselves are in peril. I'm reminded of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount that everyone who hears His Words and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built a house upon a solid rock. And when the rains and winds came and pounded against the house, it stood secure because it had its foundation on the solid rock of truth.

In this series called “Home/Hope” we're coming back to the Gospel, not just as the message we believe in order to be saved, but as the message we believe in order to live the life God calls us to in our lives and our families. The Good News we find in the Scripture is that we are needier than we know. But God's grace is more sufficient than we imagine. We need that grace for sturdy marriages that can withstand not just the big storms that will inevitably come, but the thousand minor irritations that can eat away at the foundation of marriages.

Maybe you've heard the old adage that says, “The family that prays together stays together.” And that is true. Statistics have shown that families that pray together and have a home centered on Jesus Christ and His Word have a much better chance of weathering the storms that will come to every home. “The family that prays together stays together,” not because prayer is some kind of magic pill. No, it is because that family that truly prays together taps into the powerful resources of God for their homes.

Let's just focus in on this one verse, Romans 12:12. Romans is one the deepest explanations of the Gospel in the Bible. But it also shows practically speaking how the Gospel plays out in our relationships, including at home. There are three verbs here that carry the weight of commands.

All the verbs are present active verbs, meaning continuous action. Let me show you how you can make these three actions a part of your everyday life in order to build a sturdy marriage that can withstand the storms that come.

1. BE JOYFUL IN HOPE.

Romans 12:12a - Be joyful in hope...

It may seem odd that God would command us to be joyful ... to rejoice. So the first thing we need to know is that...

To rejoice is a choice. To rejoice is a command. It's not how we feel when things are going great for us. Rather it is an attitude we choose. The Bible says to rejoice in the Lord always, even in the challenging times of life. Sin causes us to be negative; grace enables us to enjoy the blessing that God has brought into our lives through our mate. I deliberately choose to rejoice in what God is doing in and through my mate.

Proverbs 5:18b - May you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

To rejoice is to be grateful. Over time it is easy for us to take one another for granted. If we're not careful we'll stop noticing the good things about our mates. Then it becomes easy to start thinking, "Why isn't my mate like that person?" It becomes easier to see the good in someone else rather than in the good in your mate.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION – This year the NBA's Most Valuable Player Award went to Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors. He's an exciting basketball player, but more importantly he is a strong Christ-follower. In his MVP acceptance speech he started by saying, "This is a tremendous honor. First and foremost, I have to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for blessing me with the talents to play this game, with the family to support me, day in and day out. I am his humble servant right now, and I can't say it enough how important my faith is to how I play the game and who I am. I'm just blessed, and I'm just thankful for where I am." Steph Curry went on to thank his family and community who made his success possible ... his mom and dad, his wife, his siblings, his coaches, and the administration and staff, even the equipment manager, of the Golden State Warriors.

To rejoice is a choice to be grateful to God for the people He has put in your life. When is the last time you thanked God for your mate? When is that last time you expressed real gratitude to them? But also...

To rejoice is to be hopeful. It says to "rejoice in hope." Hope is the expectation that God has something greater and better ahead. Hope is what keeps us from being overwhelmed with discouragement. If we believe that God is loving, gracious and merciful, then we have to have hope. I can be hopeful because I know that God is working in my mate and is using the adversity that comes in relationships to do His refining work in me.

So the first action is to consistently be joyful in hope. The next action that will build a sturdy marriage is to...

2. BE PATIENT IN TROUBLE.

Romans 12:12b - Be ... patient in affliction...

“Affliction” here means trouble or pressure. The word “patient” is a combination of two words that mean “to remain under.” So it’s the picture of choosing to obey God by staying under the pressure of difficulty in marriage, not looking to escape it.

ILLUSTRATION - We can be patient when we know that God is working in our lives and in our mates. Years ago people used an acronym ... BPWMGITWMY. You’d see it on tee shirts. Anyone remember what it stood for? It stood for “Be Patient With Me; God Isn’t Through With Me Yet.” That’s how we can be patient in the troubles of marriage.

ILLUSTRATION – In his book *The Meaning of Marriage* Tim Keller tells the story of when his wife’s patience was stretched to the limit. Tim was spending entirely too much time in church work, to the neglect of his family. His wife Kathy was incredibly patient and restrained, but there came a time when she had to get Tim’s attention. Tim writes of how he came home from work one day and noticed that the door to their apartment’s balcony was open. Then he heard a smashing noise coming from the balcony. Then in a few seconds he heard another crash. He walked to the balcony where he saw his wife Kathy with a hammer in her hand. She had smashed two saucers from their wedding china set. Tim shouted, “What are you doing?” Kathy looked up and explained that she had tried to be patient with him while he was working so much, but she had to somehow get his attention. What he was doing was destroying their marriage, just like she was destroying the pieces of china. Then she took the hammer and smashed another saucer. Tim Keller said he sat down trembling, thinking this is really serious if the only way his wife could get his attention was by smashing her china. “Okay, I’m listening.” As they talked Kathy was not out of control. She spoke calmly but forcefully. As she did Tim realized how deluded he had been for neglecting his family in this way. Kathy saw Tim really listening and she responded by hugging him. But then she went on to explain with a grin, “I wasn’t having a meltdown by smashing these saucers. Actually the cups that go with them were broken years ago so I didn’t need the saucers anymore, but I’m glad you sat down and listened before I had to break anymore.”

Believe it or not, God’s goal for your marriage is more than just about your marriage. God’s goal is to transform you into the person He saved you to be in Christ. And God uses the troubles of marriage to do that. If we are patient, God will use these troubles to strengthen our trust in Him and but also our love for each other. So we must be joyful in hope and patient in trouble. The third action is to...

3. BE FAITHFUL IN PRAYER.

Romans 12:12c – Be ... faithful in prayer.

If we take God seriously then we will take prayer seriously. If believers are commanded to pray together in Scripture, then certainly a Christ-following husband and wife will need to pray together. It is in prayer that we access the grace of God for our lives and our homes. And grace gives your marriage a lifetime warranty ... guaranteed to never fail. Prayer is important because it keeps the focus of your relationship on God. When we pray together we are moving toward God.

DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATION – Last week I showed you the diagram of the triangle that I sometimes use with couples as they prepare for marriage. Work on your relationship with God. The closer you get to God the closer you grow to each other.

If we don't pray individually and together we are (1) *presuming* upon God's grace when He has clearly taught us to ask for it, or (2) we are *assuming* we can do things in our own strength. When we leave God out of the equation we can easily grow discouraged and overwhelmed as we try to do it in our own strength.

A while back I gave us an outline for prayer that follows the Model Prayer of Jesus in Matthew 6. Many of us know this by memory. Let me show you how it can serve as the pattern for you praying together as a couple. Prayer connects your marriage to...

- **We pray the praise of God – “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...”**

Prayer reminds us that we are not alone in the journey of marriage. Like a father, God is committed to what is best for us. Prayer places us in the very real presence of God. Of course, God is always present. But in prayer we acknowledge His presence in a very real way. We look to Him together.

- **We pray the purposes of God – “Your kingdom come, your will be done...”**

In this aspect of praying we lay aside our little kingdoms in order to seek first His Kingdom. Just think about how much trouble there is in marriage because one or both of us is really only thinking about our little kingdom. We have to be committed together to the Kingdom of God, to fulfilling His purposes in our lives, our marriages and in our children. With every decision we think, “What best furthers the Kingdom of God?” Then you pursue God's purpose together.

- **We pray the provision of God – “Give us today our daily bread.”**

This reminds us that we are all needy. If Jesus taught us to pray for something as inconsequential as bread, how much more must we depend on Him for everything else. Think how much trouble we would be spared if we asked God to meet our needs rather than going first

to our own plans and provisions. Notice that Jesus tells us to pray for our “daily bread.” We need to stay in daily connection with Him through prayer.

- **We pray the pardon of God – “Forgive us our debts...”**

It is by prayer that we bring our sin before God, honestly and humbly admitting we are sinners. When we confess our sin to God in the presence of our mates we are humbling ourselves before them. This reminds us that we are in daily need of forgiveness. And it is from the grace of His forgiveness that we are able to forgive others.

- **We pray the protection of God – “Deliver us from the evil one.”**

Listen, Satan wants to destroy your marriage. But it’s the grace of God we access through prayer that gives us strength in the face his attacks. You see, our greatest struggle is not with our mate’s sin or weaknesses; it’s with our own sin and weaknesses. And we need God to deliver us from ourselves and the devices of Satan. Prayer allows you to place a cover of God’s protection over your life, your marriage and your family. The last thing Satan wants a married couple to do is pray. That’s why it’s sometimes difficult for couples to pray together, particularly in the beginning. Satan is fighting us.

Maybe you’ve just neglected the spiritual side of your relationship as husband and wife. Perhaps it is because one or both of you aren’t as close to God as you need to be. As we close, let me leave you with these three challenges:

- Honestly and humbly admit if you haven’t been saved. To live without Christ is to live without meaning and purpose. When you are saved you and your mate can experience a love together that is only found in Jesus Christ.
- If you don’t regularly pray together outside of prayer at meals, set a goal of praying together five days a week. To start out, it may be just one of you praying. It may be brief at first, but with the goal that in time you both pray aloud and your praying will grow more extensive.
- If you already pray together ... look for ways to deepen your prayer life ... to take it to the next level. As you do you will see God’s grace flow like a mighty flood into your home.