

## STORM-STRONG FAMILIES ...LOVE WELL (garden relationships)

*Ephesians 5:1 Be imitators of God, as beloved, children, and walk in love.*

It is "Mother's Day" Sunday. Where did this annual observance come from? Her name was

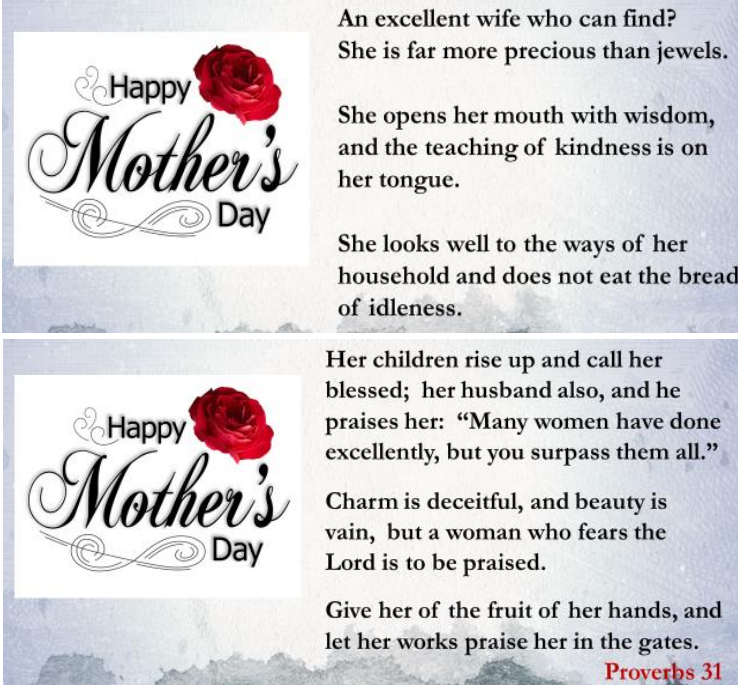
**Anna Maria Reeves-Jarvis** of Grafton, West Virginia, organized a club of women to nurse wounded soldiers from both the North and South during the Civil War.

After the war, Reeves-Jarvis started "Mothers' Friendship Days" to reconcile families that had been divided by the conflict.

Throughout her life, Reeves-Jarvis modeled the ideals of Victorian motherhood. She gave up her dreams of college to care for an older husband and four children. She bore the loss of seven other children with grace. She taught Sunday school in the local Methodist church for twenty years and stayed active in benevolent work.

Her death in 1905 devastated her daughter Anna. She honored her mother's memory by initiating a holiday honoring all mothers. Mother's Day was first celebrated in 1908 in Grafton (where Anna grew up) and Philadelphia (where she lived as an adult). Later, in a resolution passed May 8, 1914, the U.S. Congress officially established the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

— Elesha Coffman, "Mom, We Salute You," *Christian History Newsletter* (May 10, 2002)



Happy Mother's Day

An excellent wife who can find?  
She is far more precious than jewels.

She opens her mouth with wisdom,  
and the teaching of kindness is on  
her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her  
household and does not eat the bread  
of idleness.

Happy Mother's Day

Her children rise up and call her  
blessed; her husband also, and he  
praises her: "Many women have done  
excellently, but you surpass them all."

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is  
vain, but a woman who fears the  
Lord is to be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and  
let her works praise her in the gates.

**Proverbs 31**


### PRAYER

**A storm-strong family has the humility and courage to listen to God, believe His revelation, and use His wisdom.**


**In so doing, the Lord will build their house, to their joy and to His glory.**

Psalm 127:1


Matthew 7:24-27



**FOUNDATION STONE #1**  
**A storm-strong family must have Jesus Christ unmistakably at the center**  
 The good news (Gospel) = His life-saving Lordship can transform any family



“Jesus, you are my Savior and my Lord. You live in me through Your Spirit, powerfully in me. What kind of person do you want to make me to be? What kind of changes do you want to bring about in my thinking, in my choosing, in my relationships? How do you want to make my family ‘storm-strong’ through me?”




**FOUNDATION STONE #2**  
**A storm-strong family fears the Lord**  
 -- dependent, obedient, aware --  
**Psalm 128** (Cf. Proverbs 1:7, 28-30)

**Proverbs 14:26-27** In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.  
 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.

**Proverbs 28:14** Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

OK...so here's the 3<sup>rd</sup> foundation stone.



**FOUNDATION STONE #3**  
**A storm-strong family loves well**  
 “loving God, loving others”

Did you see that coming? Some of you are saying, “What took you so long?” A storm strong family *loves* well. And what I mean is this:

**When a Jesus-centered family –  
one that gladly fears the Lord –  
[when that family] commits to  
humbly loving God and loving others  
it is remarkably storm-strong. Why?**

1st

Because LOVING WELL is the **best expression** of what it means to be a **follower and imitator of Jesus Christ**  
“**the mark** of a disciple”

#### John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**: just as **I have loved you**, you also are to **love one another**. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have **love for one another**.”

### Kinds of **LOVE**

**EROS** – sexual or passionate love (inherent blindness in this)  
**PHILIA** – friendship, goodwill love (significant interests shared)  
**STORGE** – family love (parent<>child, sibling<> sibling)  
**AGAPE** – chosen, self-sacrificing love (not-feeling-dependent)  
**LUDUS** – playful, uncommitted love (casual, undemanding)  
**PRAGMA** – a practical, enduring love (founded on reason, duty)  
**PHILAUTIA** – self-love (healthy or unhealthy), often excessive

Dr. Neel Burton

For Better For Worse: Should I get Married?

So, what kind of love was Jesus talking about – the kind of love that “marked” us out as His disciples?

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**AGAPE** – chosen, self-sacrificing love

(not-feeling-dependent)

a loving that thoughtfully always seeks the best for another despite personal cost or disadvantage

### Ephesians 5:1-2

Therefore be imitators of God, as **beloved** (“children who have received agape love”) children. And **walk in** (agape) **love**, as **Christ loved** (agape) us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

2<sup>nd</sup>

Because LOVING WELL is the **best expression** of what it means to be a **follower and imitator of Jesus Christ**  
“the mark of a disciple”

Because LOVING WELL is the **best cohesion** of a joyful family  
“the bond of love”

### COLOSSIANS 3:12-14

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

And above all these **put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.**

3<sup>rd</sup> Because...

Because LOVING WELL is the **best expression** of what it means to be a **follower and imitator of Jesus Christ**  
“the mark of a disciple”

Because LOVING WELL is the **best cohesion** of a joyful family  
“the bond of love”

Because LOVING WELL is the **best approach** to **personal centeredness and maturity**

### 1 Corinthians 13

<sup>4</sup> **Love** is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant  
<sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;  
<sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.  
<sup>7</sup> **Love** bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. **When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.**

<sup>13</sup> So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;  
but **the greatest of these is love.**

You might ask, “Hey David Staff...what does **this AGAPE loving** really look like?...the best expression of a true disciple of Jesus, the best cohesion of a joyful family, the best approach for everyone in my family (including me) to truly mature?” What is chosen, self-sacrificing love?

In a small Jewish town in Russia, a rabbi disappeared each Friday morning for several hours. His devoted disciples boasted that during those hours their rabbi went to heaven and talked to God.

A stranger who moved into town was skeptical, so he decided to check things out. He hid and

watched the rabbi.

The rabbi got up in the morning, said his prayers, then dressed in peasant clothes. He grabbed an ax, went into the woods, and for hours hand-cut firewood, which he then hauled to a shack on the outskirts of the village, where an old woman and her sick, bedridden son lived.

The rabbi left them the wood and went home.

The newcomer became the rabbi's disciple.

Now, whenever he hears a villager say, "On Friday morning our rabbi ascends to heaven," the newcomer quietly adds, "if not higher."<sup>1</sup>

Take a moment to think about that story. **What is AGAPE loving?** It is someone who is very aware of what someone else truly needs. It is someone who chooses to give of themselves to meet that need...often at extra-mile effort and personal cost...without trumpets blowing or the camera's rolling. Usually out of a response of spending time with God. Which leads to seeing a need and choosing, often sacrificially, to meet that need.

It's the way Jesus loved me. It's the way Jesus loved you. AGAPE LOVE is LOVING alignment with GOD which leads to LOVING sacrificially OTHERS (others).

**When a Jesus-centered family –  
one that gladly fears the Lord –  
[when that family] commits to  
humbly loving God and loving others  
it is remarkably storm-strong.**

## CONCLUSION

There are things that have happened to me in life that I will ever forget. One of them happened at a church missions conference. In our Colorado church, we had invited a number of the missionaries we were supporting home (a conference I believe Gary and Marilyn Reedy were a part of). And in one of our conference meetings, we asked one couple who had been serving overseas for years to sit up front on the platform, along with their 5 kids (ranging in ages from elementary school through high school), and take questions from the audience.

Of great interest to our congregation was that all of this couples' kids were on board. None of them were sitting up their rolling their eyes at-being-at-yet-another-church-meeting, or having to be "in the public eye." You could tell they genuinely loved their parents and each other. Then, someone asked what was immediately recognized as the obvious question. Someone asked the kids, "May I

ask you, *Why haven't you rebelled?* You seem to like each other. You seem to take delight in one another? I mean, what's up with your family?"

One of the teenagers quietly took the mic, and I've never forgotten her answer. Very humbly, very beautifully she said,

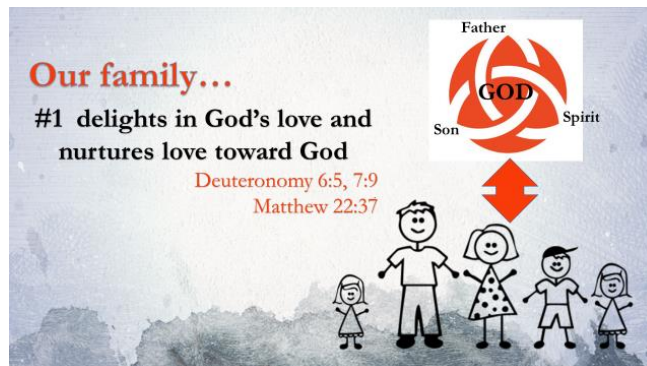
"Well, we've never thought it any disadvantage being 'missionary kids.' Actually, we love it. Mom and Dad really love each other and what God has called them to do. They don't expect us to be perfect, but we have a lot of fun together.

But we have people in the country we live into our home all the time. All kinds of people with all kinds of needs. And when you see God's Spirit changing people's lives in your living room; well, that's so cool. I mean, why would we rebel against that?"

That was such a powerful word.

Don't misunderstand...as we will talk about in the weeks to come...some young people who have the privilege of growing up with the best Christian parents still do rebel. Some still do walk away from God. That said, any family which chooses **to be Jesus-centered, to fear the Lord, and commits to loving God and sacrificially loving others** has a great chance of prevailing in the storms of this self-centered culture. A great chance at the Lord building the house.

Next Sunday morning will come Part II of the Storm-Strong Family that loves well. We will take up a family's answer to this question: ***What kind of family do we want to be?*** Here's a quick preview.



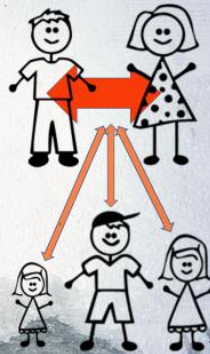
### My parent(s)...

#2 always personally invest in loving God obediently in order to grow in loving each other



### My parents'...

#3 mutual love relationship is primary; their love relationship with us is secondary.



### My parent(s)...

#4 model loving each other well so that we learn how to love one another



### Our family...

#5 believes/lives that loving God and loving others go hand-in-hand



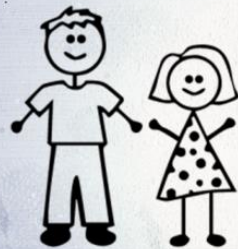
Our family... #6 chooses not to love the "world" and its confusion

1 John 2:15-17



**Our family... #7 prayerfully depends on  
God's Holy Spirit to be fully  
Jesus/Gospel centered**

**1 John 2:15-17**



Not surprisingly,  
this starts  
here...

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Jim McGuigan, *Jesus, Hero of Thy Soul* (Howard, 1998)