

STORM-STRONG FAMILIES LOVE WELL (part 3)

Over the past 19 weeks or so, I've had the immense privilege of meeting every Tuesday morning, at 6:30 AM and for 1 hour, with 8-10 men who are leaders in our communities and in business. Our focus? Charles C. Manz's incredible book *The Leadership Wisdom of Jesus*.

You probably never heard of Charles Manz, unless you have trafficked in the leadership board rooms of 3M, Ford, Motorola, Xerox, American Express, the Mayo Clinic, Proctor & Gamble, BancOne and the United States and Canadian governments...to name a few.

But Manz is no name-dropper. He is a deeply committed Christian, and his book about Jesus' leadership wisdom is (in my view) priceless.

For my money, his last chapters are the best. Chapters on what Jesus taught leaders about mustard seeds. Have you ever seen a "mustard seed"? Here you go, with a few things beside it to give you an idea of its size. As you can see, there is nothing impressive nor sizable about a mustard seed. But Jesus used it as a powerful teaching tool (Matthew 13:31-32):

"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Charles Manz offers this:

I have always found this passage to be one of the most remarkable of all Jesus' teachings. In our ultra-faced-paced world of international megconglomerates, sometimes every seems to be exaggerated way beyond anything natural.

It's almost as though we live in some kind of virtual-reality cartoon in which things are blown way out of proportion. If you want to survive in this sort of alternate reality, then a philosophy of "more-is-better" seems to rule the day. Don't do anything small; instead, exaggerate choices and actions.

Jesus presents a deeply contrasting message. He counsels that we don't have to worry about pursuing unrealistic larger-than-life illusions. Rather, the smallest of things—indeed wee little mustard seeds—can be the source of great results. His message suggests that organizations and their leaders should think twice before they strive for the large, obvious choices, before they pull the ostentatious, shiny, loud-clanging action levers. Instead, the subtle, seemingly very small but positive and useful actions can be the real tickets to the greatest of results.¹

His chapter ends with this box:



#6

Wise leaders understand the power of small things that can be the seeds of greatness.

#7

If you're just joining us, here's where we've been.



families

Wise ~~leaders~~ understand the power of small things that can be the seeds of greatness.

We've heard from the Spirit of God that a Storm-Strong family understands the power of what some may call "small things." The small but powerful

- importance of everyone being **Jesus/Gospel centered**
- commitment to **fear the Lord**
- decision to **love well** -

Our family...

#1 delights in God's love and nurtures love toward God
Deuteronomy 6:5, 7:9
Matthew 22:37

Basic #1 We spend time understanding God's love for us, and expressing our love Him

My parent(s)...

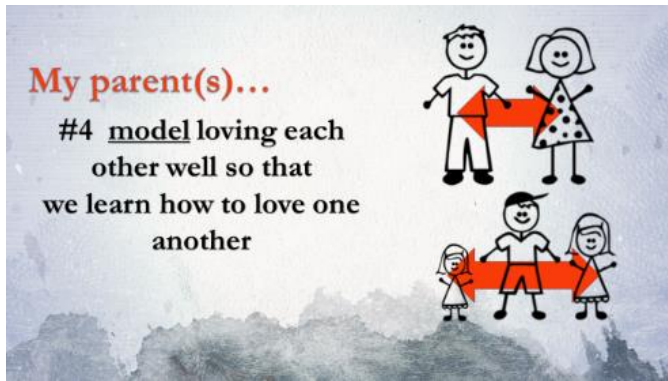
#2 always personally invest in loving God obediently in order to grow in loving each other

Basic #2 Dad and Mom are growing in love for God, and thus in love for each other

My parents'...

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

Basic #3 My parent's love for each other is primary; we kids find our anchor in their relationship



Basic #4 My parents model 1 Cor 13 kind of loving each other so well that we learn how to love one another

If I may, let's add 3 more **growing-in-love** family basics.



Growing-in-love family BASIC #5 – Our family believes and lives that loving God and loving others go hand in hand.

Mark 12:28-34 (ESV) And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”

Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you

shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’

The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Do you have a “family charter”? What’s that, you ask? Listen for 2 minutes to Kathryn Lee, from the *Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*, at www.greatkids.orgⁱⁱ

<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/videos/family-charter/> (1:57)

Of course, this is a great idea, one of many you can find at their website. My wonder is, *Why not create a family charter in terms of the two greatest commandments that Jesus taught anyone could strive to live?* Asking and answering together (for example) 3 simple questions.

- #1 What are the best ways we as a family can express our love for God?
- #2 What kind of behaviors towards one another and others will express God’s love?
- #3 How can we share and celebrate the opportunities to love God gives us?

“Wow,” you say. “That sounds like a lot of talking together...and planning...and work. Do we really need to be that intentional? I mean really...a *Family Charter* about **growing in love?**”

How storm-strong do you want your family to be? You've heard it before: *If we fail to plan, we are planning to fail.* Gordon MacDonald shares about an airline flight he'll never forget.ⁱⁱⁱ

My wife, Gail, and I were flying to Boston. We were seated near the back of the airliner in the two aisle seats across from each other. As the plane loaded up, a woman with two small children took the row of seats in front of us. Another woman took a seat across the aisle next to one of the kids, and the mom held the other child on her lap.

I hoped the kids wouldn't be noisy.

My prayer wasn't answered. The two children had a tough time. The air was turbulent, the children cried a lot — their ears hurt — and it was a miserable flight. The two women kept trying to help and comfort these children. The woman at the window played with the child in the middle seat, trying to make her feel good and paying her a lot of attention.

Things went downhill from there. As we got toward the last part of the flight, the child in the middle seat got sick. The next thing I knew she was losing everything from every part of her body. The diaper wasn't on tight, and before long a stench began to rise through the cabin. It was unbearable.

I watched as the woman next to the window patiently comforted the child and tried her best to clean up the mess and make something good out of a bad situation. The plane landed, and when we pulled up to the gate, all of us were ready to exit that plane as fast as we could. The flight attendant came up with paper towels and handed them to the woman in the window seat and said, "Here, ma'am, these are for your little girl."

The woman said, "This isn't my little girl."

"Aren't you traveling together?"

"No, I've never met this woman and these children before in my life."

Suddenly I realized this woman had found the opportunity to give mercy. She was, in the words of Christ, the person who was "a neighbor."

"By this ALL men will know you're my disciples," Jesus said, "if you have love one for another."

You and your kids saying, "Yep...our family loves God, and others." We talk about it. We plan to do it. We celebrate it!



BASIC #6 – Our family chooses not to love the “world” and its confusion”

1 John 2:12 I am writing to you, **little children**,

because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

¹³ I am writing to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, **young men**, because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, **children**, because you know the Father.

¹⁴ I write to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from

the beginning. I write to you, **young men**, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Our family chooses, because we love God and we love each other...we choose not to love the

“world” and its confusion.

If I may be very frank with all of us this morning, I believe we need to be clearer with one another and especially with our families about “the world.” We need to be very clear about the danger of loving the world. We need to take each other’s hands and look each other in the eye and say to one another, “The world is something we choose not to love.” Jesus’ closest friend John is very clear. If we love the world, we are not loving our heavenly Father. If we are truly loving our heavenly Father, than we are not loving the word “nor the things in the world.”

What is “the world? Why is it dangerous? And why must we choose “not to love” it? Pastor Warren Wiersbe, who just recently after 89 years went home to be with the Lord, puts it plainly:

Sooner or later, every believer discovers that the Christian life is a battleground, not a playground, and that he/she faces an enemy who is much stronger than he is—apart from the Lord. As Christians, we face 3 enemies: the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The “world” refers to the system around us that is opposed to God...“society apart from God” is a simple, but accurate, definition of the world. It caters to the “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15-17).^{iv}

Why is loving the “system and society” that is opposed to God – that is, believes it can think and act and navigate life successfully without God or His wisdom or His saving grace – why is loving that system so dangerous? I’ll put it simply – it offers nothing that lasts and prevents you from embracing everything that will last (repeat!). John: “and the world is passing away”

Ken Mansfield was the United States manager for Apple Records (the Beatles’ label). Today he still speaks about his “good times” with the Beatles before they broke up. But when they did and the good times stopped and the money evaporated. By the mid-1980s, Mansfield hit bottom.

By God’s grace, through a woman with whom he fell in love, Mansfield found Jesus.

“Before committing my life to Christ,” Mansfield admits, *Billboard* magazine was his Bible; record charts, his God; and prestigious positions, his purpose. “The Holy Grail was a Grammy, and the best table at the Brown Derby, the Promised Land,” Mansfield says.

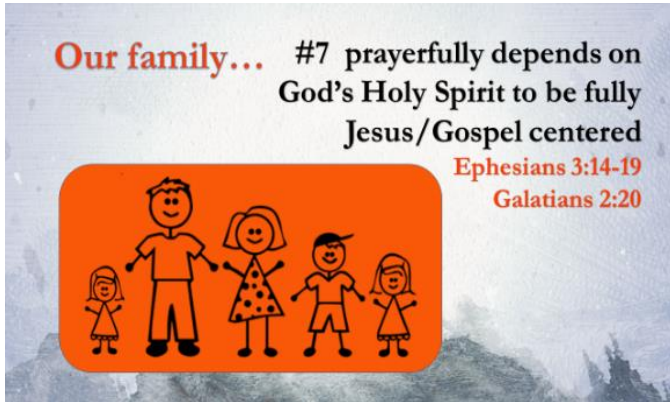
After his conversion, he realized how hollow the way of the Beatles had been compared to the way of Christ. “They [the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] are the authors of the map I needed for my journey,” he wrote.

“I needed a chart, a journal with clear directions, a log to refer to — a guidebook wherein their commands could speak to my wandering spirit. I needed a book so powerful that its very words could burn a living message into the absolute heart of my heart. I needed the irrefutable, holy Word of God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of the very seas I was lost upon!”^v

Dad, Mom...that chart, that journal with clear directions, the real genuine life of Jesus and love for your Heavenly Father is the reality your kids, your family, needs to experience from you. As one of

our youth staff pulled me aside this week and so helpfully shared with me:

Hey, Pastor David...I've been working with our kids. It's as clear as day. What the parents prioritize, their kids prioritize. What the parents believe to be important, their kids believe to be important. Our parents may not think they can shepherd their kids, but the fact is they do...and they can. If they are Christians, they have the Word and the Holy Spirit...so do their kids. What's missing is conversation, with the help of the Holy Spirit...talking together about what they will prioritize, and love.



BASIC family-growing-in-love #7 Our family prayerfully depends on God's Holy Spirit to be fully Jesus/Gospel centered.

"My mom and I talk. My dad and I talk. We pray together. We put Jesus in the center. We take the time read..."

Galatians 2:20 together

"I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I but Christ lives in Me."

"We talk about what that means. We read **Ephesians 3:16-17** together..."

16-17 that according to the riches of God's glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

"My parents aren't on my back. Their on my team. And they're on their knees. We're figuring out how to be storm-strong in Jesus, storm-strong in fearing the Lord, storm-strong in loving God and loving one another." Charles Manz is right on.

When Jesus said the greatest commandments were loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and loving our neighbor, he set the sights squarely on love. Mustard seed power suggests [planting] love mixed with faith can be the ultimate source of our strength. Jesus teaches that the combination of love and faith is far more potent than mixing nitro and glycerin or any other explosive combination. Love and faith are the ultimate ingredients for mountain-moving leadership.^{vi}

Copyright 2019 © David A. Staff
All rights reserved

ⁱ Charles C. Manz, *The Leadership Wisdom of Jesus: Practical Lessons for Today* (Berrett-Kohler Publ., Inc, 1998, 1999), 151,153.

ⁱⁱ Her 2 minute talk includes the Objective (of a family charter): What kinds of emotions and behaviors does the family want to feel? Answers to 3 questions:

- How do we want to feel as a family?
- What kinds of behaviors do we need to have to feel these things? (be specific)
- When conflict arises, when somebody breaks the charter, how do we resolve it

ⁱⁱⁱ Gordon MacDonald, in the sermon "Pointing to Jesus: Generosity," Grace Chapel, Lexington, Massachusetts (February 22, 1998), in *Illustrations that Connect*, Illustration 323.

^{iv} Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Gaining the Things that Money Can't Buy – EPHESIANS* (David C. Cook, 1979, 2009), 173.

^v Ken Mansfield, *The Beatles, the Bible, and Bodega Bay* (Broadman & Holman, 2000)

^{vi} Manz, 159, 164.