*Introduction:*

Dismiss kids. Welcome everyone (Connect Card). Moms - We love you. We honor you. We celebrate you today.

God thinks a lot of mothers. Not only did God choose to see to it that every person on the planet comes into our world through a mother (and that is an absolute miracle), God chose, in his mysterious ways, to send the Redeemer and Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, through a woman, a very excellent woman named Mary.

We should treasure the gift of family and relationships that are like family.

And what we see as we move through the Bible is that God desire for us to relate to one another like family.

The question is: how can we learn to do that more effectively?

**“****Like Family”**

**1 Thessalonians 2:7-12**

**1. Diverse relationships call for diverse action.**

Like a Mother

At times, we love like a caring mother. The picture is intensified when we realize this is not just a mother, but a nursing mother.

CARE

* There is a tenderness, a warm affection.
* How many of you know being a mother is not an easy job? Somebody say: “Moms are amazing!”
* How many of you know that children relate to mothers in a different way than they do dad?
  + In our house… my kids love me…
  + But there is a colossal difference in the word count between “mommy” and “daddy.”
    - The word “mommy” is echoed like a chorus throughout the day… Every day.
    - “Mommy. Mommy. Mommy. Mommy.”
    - ‘Where’s mommy? When is mommy going to be back? Mommy, can I have a snack?” 1 minute later: “Mommy, can I have a snack? Mommy, will you play with me?”
  + Do I even exist? Did I not bring you into this world too? I know you’re only 5 but do I need to go ahead and explain how this works?
* Why is that?
  + Because a mother cares and mother loves. Having experienced the tender affection, the softer voice of a mother’s concern, children run to mom again and again. This does not denigrate fathers, but it highlights the unique influence of a mom.
* “A nursing mother taking care of her own children…” Think about the depth of care a mother offers to her newborn child.
  + She conforms her life to meet the needs of that child.
  + In order to meet that baby’s needs, the mother rearranges. Midnight, 2am, 430am, 630a. And on the schedule goes on…
* And a mother’s love never stops. The older I get the more I realize it. I’m 38 years old and my mom still moms me. You need to get some rest. Don’t stay up too late. That’s just the way it is! A mother’s heart. The longer I live in Medford the more I love and respect mothers, particularly those who endure the difficulty of seeing their children suffer in pain. Specifically, I think about young men and women suffering from addiction. Listen, they need our prayers, but do you know who else does? That’s right. Their mothers! A mother’s love never dies!

T: Paul is saying: “Like a mother cares for her children, that’s how much we cared for you” Now look at verse 8. It’s here we see the holistic love of a mother as the metaphor for the way Paul loved the people in Thessalonica.

Love is giving yourself for the benefit of another. Love is a whole-personed response. Look at the ways Paul describes his love and don’t miss what I’m about to share.

* Affectionately
* Desirous of them…
* Shared (not just the gospel) but their lives.
* Very dear to Paul & his companions (Silas & Timothy)
* Affection speaks to what? Extending love.
* Desirous describes what they want (namely them)
* Sharing - describes their actions
* Very dear - how they felt about them.

What’s the Point?

* When God saves us? He redeems every part of us.
  + Gospel: tells us that every part of us is effected by sin and the fall of man (where Adam & Eve fell from God’s grace and were removed from the immediate presence of God). They no longer reflected God by loving what he loves, wanting what he wants, thinking like he thinks, feeling what he feels, acting like he acts.
  + BUT… when the gospel
    - This is really
    - We truncate the work of God and what it means to be in Christ when we falsely assume or reduce the focus of our lives to behavior. Anyone can do something for someone without sincerely. I can serve you bread and hope you choke on it!
    - But Jesus changes everything…
    - This is how mothers love their children
    - This is how Paul loved his people.
  + THIS IS HOW WE SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER!

But let’s zoom in on action…

This is not just do what I say… There is a relationship here. I love the word play. Some people shared a message with you, but they didn’t care about you. We not only shared a message. We shared our lives.

Please, I beg you: Do not become a part of a church where the leaders fail to love. They may say all the right things, but not truly love the people. Leadership begins with the force of one’s character and the chief characteristic of one’s character is LOVE.

“A gospel messenger (we could say - Christian) who stands detached from his audience has not yet been touched by the very gospel he proclaims.”

That’s what Paul is saying… we shared our lives with you. We spent time. You saw behind the curtain of our lives. We were open. We revealed our imperfections. We disclosed our struggles, doubts, and fears. We prayed together for our hopes and dreams.

What does this mean for us: Gospel Community!

* Love is vulnerable. Vulnerability means we share our lives without reservation even though it could hurt.
* How are you sharing your life with people? Are you generous with your time or stingy?
* Do you reveal your imperfections? Share your hopes, doubts, struggles and fears? Do people know the real you?
* This is why Groups are so important… we share our lives together. We actually get to know one another, so that we can love in a meaningful way (one anothers).
  + To not, is to rob yourself of real relationships that not only bring you life but bring life to others.

Let’s keep it real: love is risky business.

* “There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.” C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

Two motivators to share your life… even the ugly stuff.

* World? - Fallen and Broken. We all experience pain. Life is NOT Perfect.
* Gospel? We’re NOT perfect.
* Gospel - frees us to love because of the love we’ve received and it motivates our love.
* On the cross, Jesus suffered the greatest imaginable pain that we might be brought back to God.

So… Paul says, I loved you like a mother, but I also loved you…

Like a Father

* Diverse relationships require diverse action.
* At times we need care and tender affection. At other times, we need to be encouraged and exhorted and charged. Fathers, are often known for providing encouragement and direction.
* At times we need a hug. At times, we need a halftime speech.
  + My dad gave me a lot of halftime speeches, when it wasn’t halftime.
  + Son, you need to go help your mom. Son, put your best foot forward. You can do better than that!
  + Playing for my dad - Sophomore and Junior year… (“Tanner” - leader, point guard, and best player. He demanded more of me because
* One more insight into the text and the implications for relationships in the church… “The emphasis in the Greek implicit in the phrases “each of you” and “his own children” strengthens the impression of personal and individual concern.”
* We love each person with appreciation of God’s unique work in their life. We delight in our differences, because our God is a creative God.

Here’s the message: We need both!

* We need affection and (a word that our culture increasingly dislikes) authority. The only problem with our problem with authority is the problem of God. God is the ultimate authority and he establishes human authority for human flourishing. But what’s the point? We need both!
* **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)**
* Jesus - full of grace AND full of truth. The two always go together.

T: Diverse relationships call for diverse action. The question is: how?

**2. Diverse action at diverse times requires God’s wisdom.**

At all times, we love with the wisdom of God

What is wisdom?

1. Knowledge applied to the glory of God.
2. “Wisdom is an ability to make good decisions based on knowledge, and then act on those decisions in a way that’s effective and makes a difference.” - Anthony Selvaggio
3. “Wisdom is God’s ability to get to his appointed ends through his appointed means. GET THIS “ - Grudem

This is what I want… VISION — This is what will get them there… WISDOM

It takes wisdom to reach the vision. And loads of grace from God! :) Let me give you a few handles on this…

1. Know the situation.

What is happening in their lives? What is going on in that moment? The situation influences how we respond. Proverbs 26 brings this out in an amazing way…

**Answer not a fool according to his folly,**

**lest you be like him yourself.**

**Answer a fool according to his folly,**

**lest he be wise in his own eyes.**

**(Proverbs 26:4-5)**

2. Know the person…

Do you know where they are (as best as you can). The same person needs two different messages on two different days. OR that same person needs the same message delivered in two different ways on two different days.

**“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14)**

Know. Love. Speak. Do.

It all starts with knowing…

* Knowing starts with getting proximate.
  + We can’t get to unity in our diversity because we don’t get proximate. We have to spend time together! We will not know one another after one or dozen conversations.
  + Takes some effort and time, plus a lot of LOVE which binds at all together in perfect harmony.
* Ongoing relationships are crucial, BUT
* Don’t hear me saying that you have to know someone like family to receive counsel or wisdom.
  + I can meet someone for the first time today. They can tell me what’s going on in their life, and because of the grace of God, I will be able to extend caring affection or some authoritative encouragement (with affection) on the spot.
* What I am saying… this happens best in the context of consistent knowing, loving, before we speak (words of counsel, encouragement, and wisdom) and then do (by helping them take action!)

3. Know your God

**“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” (James 1:5)**

Parenting Wisdom…

* God, does my kid need a hug or a halftime speech?
* God, does my kid need a hug, then a halftime speech or a halftime speech and then a hug?
* God, what should I do? What is the question I should ask? Should I raise my voice or soften it?
* What is the best form of discipline that will help them see the seriousness of their actions?
* What word from your Word can I share with them to point them to you?

**“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14)**

Every child is different. Every day with our children is different. We need God’s wisdom to get to his vision. And here’s the good news… At the end of the day, IN CHRIST, the vision is the same for all of us!

**3. Diverse action at diverse times leads to one unified goal.**

Why?

“Walk in a manner worthy of God.”

* Reason: “you might continue walking [περιπατεῖν, peripatein] worthily of the God who is calling [καλοῦντος, kalountos] you all into his own kingdom and honor/ (2 Horizons)

CHRIST! Is the goal. We are called to walk worthy of him!

* Is this your greatest concern for one another? Holy, righteous, blameless (10)
* Can you imagine what will happen when…?
  + Our greatest concern for one another is how we’re prioritizing God?
  + Our greatest time praying for one another is not about stuff (though God cares about the stuff) but about one another’s hearts before God?
* I love how this is happening in our church.
  + People sharing life together around the gospel.
  + People meeting needs because they really love one another.
  + People praying together to grow, not just closer to one another, but most of all, closer to God!

T: I love how Paul not only tells them the goal but he loads encouragement and vision behind it!

**VISION**

* Encouragement with vision. Vision on top of Vision.
* Walk worthy of God - he’s calling you “into his own kingdom and glory.” What is Paul saying?
  + Look what awaits you!
  + Can you see it?
  + God is working. Continue walking because God is continually calling you into his kingdom and honor. You’ll dwell there - with him - forever!

What’s your vision? For you life? For our church?

* Share Dreams.. From StratOp Retreat…
  + Every person filled with the fullness of God to the point of overflowing.
  + The power of the gospel healing all forms of brokenness, bringing transforamotin to all
  + Acts 2:47 - “day by day” people are being saved.
  + Sending capacity is greater than our seating capacity!
* Moms (parents) what are your dreams for your kids…
  + For them to make a lot of money or find the work they love.
  + For them to live the American Dream or to discover God’s dreams.
  + Do you dream about the impact they can make in this world because they treasure God above everything? That they are willing to do anything and go anywhere for his name?

God give us your dreams and may those dreams be about the fulfilling the one unified goal of waling worthy of your name!

*Conclusion*:

**The Point: Live like family through God’s love and wisdom.**

Response….