

# JOY IN A CLEANSED HOUSE +++

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Merry Christmas, everybody. Winter time, Christmas time, you know, like, it's always a good time to think about what's a real priority in my life, and it got me thinking, like, what's priorities in my family's life? And, you know, as I look at, like, this living room set up, it makes me really wonder if my family is built around the right things, because, like, for me, I love sports. I love ball. I played in grade school. I played in middle school. I waited, actually, in line for hours for this specific ball.

Now, I know you might not be able to read this, but this is so old, the autograph is almost worn off, but there were hours waited just for this autograph, just for this ball player, and I don't know if you can see it all the way back there, but there's a signature on here. It says, To Seth, Best Wishes, Bart Starr.

There was some yays and some boos. For those of you who don't know, Bart Starr was the first NFL quarterback to win not just the first Super Bowl, but the second Super Bowl as well, and he was the quarterback of my beloved Green Bay Packers. There's some joy in the house of the Lord today for that, and some not. Last night was a rough night, but my life revolved around a lot of ball, and so I would go to practices. I would go to weightlifting. I played, like I said, in middle school, in grade school. I played in high school. A lot of time was devoted to practice and to getting better and better at this, so there's a lot of hours poured into ball.

And then I got a chance to go to college, and at my college, I had the opportunity to start training with the football team, and it made me kind of evaluate after I started lifting with all the other guys, like, I'm taking 18 credits, and what do I think I'm going to accomplish at a soaking wet 145 pounds at the time? There might be more here now, but what was I going to do if I focused more of my life on ball than on my studies?

And in my studies, because it was a Christian university, I spent more and more time with God's Word, and so I was able to see that there's a great contrast between what I was spending my time on, what I was building my priorities on, and what was truly important for the rest of my life. And that was a lesson that, like, I still am learning, and I think we're all still learning it as well.

That is, there are certain priorities that we have that, if we don't check them, if we don't think about them, if we don't pray about them, if we don't prioritize, they are going to run away from us. And I believe one of the reasons why families are more exhausted now than ever before is because of the different altars we will find to worship on.

And so why don't we start with the first one? I believe that a majority of families with children will be able to relate. I have children that are in sports, and so I know what it's like to be dad Uber for hours on end going back and forth. But if we were to quantify this with a bunch of stats that you got to brace yourself for because the stats are coming, but sometimes it's good, so you can review our priorities. Objectively, taking a step back and just looking, right?

So on average, families will spend at a minimum 4.3 hours a week per child on sports right now in North America. Also on average, we have about two kids per family. So that means that an average home with kids is spending at least eight hours a week in sports, driving to, driving from, clubs, tracks, weightlifting, the whole thing, about eight hours a week. That's the altar of ball.

And where are we in that as parents? We are the ones that should be making the priorities. So maybe we would have some control and agency over how much this is utilized. And yet 58% of adults say that youth sports are important as a family priority to spend eight hours a week on. That's what we spend here.

And that's just if you have children in sports. That's not even counting how much time we spend in front of the TV watching sports. Whether it's college, whether it's pros, it doesn't matter at all. It's like a minimum of eight hours a week at the altar of ball. You find yourself kneeling there? You get much out of it other than exhaustion?

Well, this isn't the only altar that we find ourselves at. This is the second altar. I like to call this the altar of busyness. Everybody can see that? The altar of busyness. Let's put this right here. I think this is just as insidious as the altar of ball. It'll get there. There we go.

When it comes to programming our families outside of sports, even, we're talking like academics, we're talking homework, which also means like crying and throwing pencils and dad getting super frustrated and then therapy later on down the road. All of that is entailed. But we've got homework, we've got studying, we've got tutoring, we've got academic prep. All of that.

The average family spends about six hours a week on that. So you've got four hours a week if one kid, eight hours a week at the altar of ball for the average of two plus an additional six hours of week with homework and other activities.

And how do we feel as parents? If we have these as our priorities, just these two, 68% of working parents say that juggling work and childcare is the top source of stress. We can do something about it, but we choose not to. And because of that, because we see the purpose, like leaking out of our families and out of our kids, how do we feel as the parents leading these households?

51% of us feel an increased guilt, a deep seated guilt that we are not balancing our families with other obligations. So we're talking like four to eight hours a week here. We're talking about six hours a week.

Now keep in mind, hours per week, hours per week, but these are not the altars where we find ourselves the most. You want to know the altar where we find ourselves the most? Get ready to feel really uncomfortable because it's right here.

This doesn't necessarily mean that all screens are bad, but the distraction that it causes is not, oh, well, let's figure this out better, like that. Four to eight hours a week, six hours a week. Adults average seven hours a day. Most likely because we're trying to distract ourselves away from the guilt that these altars are putting on our hearts and we're trying to numb and anesthetize the difficulty that these cause, that we make it its own idol and we set up its own altar.

And what we find is that the behaviors of the adults at the altars we allow are always going to be mimicked by our children and the altars that they participate in. And right now, if you are ages eight to 18, you will spend at least seven and a half hours per day kneeling at the altar of distraction. And that's not even including schoolwork.

Four to eight hours a week, six hours a week, seven to seven and a half hours a day. And you wonder why this Family Matters Sermon series hurts a little bit, why we're having difficulties reconciling with our siblings, not getting along with brothers and sisters, not only in our house, but within Christ as well.

And we wonder why we're having a difficulty reconciling with our parents, our parents to kids. It's because this is what our life looks like, kneeling at the altar of everything other than the true altar of Christ.

And this is going to hurt too. Because as we spend all that time at those other altars, how much time do you want to guess we spend at the true altar every single week? Do you want to know what it is? Do you want to know how many minutes per week we spend on discipleship with our family?

15 minutes. The average American household spends 15 minutes a week on discipleship or spiritual formation. And even worse, do you want to know what the percentage is of parents who don't open this book with their family in a year?

Look, I know these are a lot of stats, but these are the two I want you to bury in your heart that we only spend 15 minutes a week with our families talking about Jesus. And 67% of parents never opened this book with their children at home an entire year.

And we wonder why in the world our families are being torn apart. It's because we're allowing it. It's because we're kneeling here and we're kneeling here and we're kneeling here and we don't spend enough time kneeling at the presence of Jesus in our families. This is why our families are broken. And this is why we feel such deep seated guilt.

But this is what can change in your family's life. And so there's something I want you to carry with you from this message so that we can have a change that only Jesus can bring.

It's going to be a saying. I'm going to say it. And then I'm going to ask you to participate. We're going to participate here and online and at our other campuses as well. So I'm going to say it. Our saying for today is going to be bury the idols, build your family.

So I'm going to say bury. And I want to hear everybody, whether online or at a different campus, say the idols. And I'm going to say build. And I want to hear you say your family.

So bury, but build. Bury, but build. Amen. Because your family matters.

And as we're going through this word and seeing what God is doing through Jacob's family, we've already seen in week one that forgiveness is a must, but trust takes time to adjust.

And last week, we heard about the difficulty of parents to children with Jacob and Laban. And we heard that we're to listen to those who are above us, not because they are good, but because God is making us good.

But now I want you to get to the root causes of all of the difficulties, not only in Jacob's house, but in ours as well. And if we can bury our idols, then in Christ, we can build our families.

Now for that, I want you to open up your scriptures. Let's start busting out of that 15 minutes per week, 67% of parents with households, open up a Bible. You can open up your phone. That's totally fine. The Genesis chapter 35 verse one, because we're going to see what happens when the Lord steps into a family of idol worshipers and really makes a big change.

Genesis 35 one says this to Jacob, arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.

All right, a little bit of background here. Something has just occurred with the family of Jacob where he had to, and his family had to exact violence upon another people group. You don't need to know about what it is now.

They're coming for revenge. And Jacob's family is like, why does this keep happening to us? Why are we always the target of difficulty and violence and vengeance?

And God humbles Jacob. He says, if you want a new family, you gotta have a new house. So get out of your old life. Get out of your old house, arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there.

The old house was in a city called Shechem. That's where a lot of difficulty was brought on to the home. The new house was going to be in a place called Bethel, which in Hebrew is translated the house of God.

So do you want to have a house of difficulty and vengeance and violence and kneeling to other altars, Jacob? Or do you want to have your life changed and your family changed because your house is now called a house of God?

Well, if that's what it takes, you got to get out of the old house to get out of the old life.

Jacob would encounter God in other moments, but then you would go back to the same house where they were doing the exact same things and having the exact same problems. And so the teaching that you can have and Jacob can have is, if you want to have a Bethel house, you can't live in Shechem anymore, church.

So arise, go up to the house of God and dwell there, bury those idols, but build an altar to the God who appeared to you.

And so what does Jacob do? Here's the lesson. He actually incorporates it into his life and into his family. So he then goes to his family in verse two, to all of them, and he says, put away the foreign gods.

Because what we know from the scriptures is that as Rachel was leaving her father's house in earlier chapters, remember that story we told of Jacob waiting and working for his wife, Rachel, eventually in the house of Laban, Laban was an idolater. He had a bunch of idols in his house. And what the scriptures tell us is that Rachel grabbed those idols out of the house, hid them and brought them into their new home.

And so just like we talked about before, the priorities of the parents are lived out in the children at the different altars. You saw that here, Rachel took the priorities of her father, hid them away, brought them to her house. And the same problems happened. And as anyone surprised, no.

So Jacob says, put away the foreign gods, purify yourselves that is on the inside and change your garments that is on the outside.

The Lord is desiring you to be new and different. He wants you to dwell with him in the house of God, which means you can't live church in Shechem anymore. You can't live with the old priorities because they are not serving your family. They're not serving you well. They're not serving me and my family who is also going crazy with five children. So figure all that, those stats out multiplied by five.

But instead we're called to purify ourselves and change our garments because the old idols don't work.

Now there's a really interesting little turn of phrase here that I want to work with. So we said like the first altar that we like to worship at is the altar of Baal. Do you want to know the name of the first altar that Rachel and her family would kneel at? The altar of Baal. Like that was the name of that God.

You might have called him Baal because in English, that's what it sounds like. But in Hebrew, it's Baal. So they literally worshiped at the altar of Baal.

Is there anything new under the sun church? No.

And it wasn't just Baal that they worshiped. There were several other deities, gods and goddesses that they would worship as well that Laban's household would have worshiped as well as Rachel's household with Jacob would have worshiped.

Their altars were like the ancient equivalence of this is trying to achieve identity and achievement and control and comfort, distraction, fertility and children, image and security through what they could put together. That was their altar of Baal.

But then Jacob tells his family, purify yourselves and change your garments. Make your family look and be different.

And so in verse four, the family knows that they're always going to get what they've always got if they always worship what they've always worshiped. And so they gave to Jacob all of their foreign idols.

And this is beautiful. Jacob takes them and the scripture says that he hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem. So he's saying, family, these were our old priorities. This Shechem lifestyle is what we used to build our life on and it made our family not matter anymore and it gave us struggle.

I am literally burying the idols so I can build this family on God's grace and his presence.

And there was actually an effect that takes place. We find this in Genesis chapter 35, next verse, all of those other cities that wanted to come and try to take over and show violence on Jacob and his family.

It says that a terror from God fell upon the cities and they didn't even pursue the sons of Jacob.

That meant that God was defending what he had cleansed and blessing this new family as they transitioned from their old life and their old family to newly following the Lord.

And what's beautiful here in verse seven, Jacob makes that next big step. So he already buried the idols under the terebinth tree at Shechem and now that he's in Bethel, the house of God, it says that he built what church? An altar because there God had revealed himself to him.

And where once their old altars caused terror and grief and guilt, the Lord brings up worship and purpose and meaning for the family. So Jacob buried the idols and you can see at least at this moment in his story, it built his family well.

And just think about this, like what he built there, at least in that moment, although he has many failings after this moment, and you know, he's had many failings before this moment.

There is something blessed that's just occurred in his family because his hands are not just a little bit tired from building this altar and constructing it of the stones that were there and fresh off of all of that work.

But what we learned from the scriptures is that in the same area, he takes the same hands that built the altar to build his family.

And he also digs a well to give access to his family, to have water, to build deep roots in that community, because he knows that with the presence of God, his family's life actually has a chance to be different.

And that well comes up again and it helps somebody else. So if you think for a second that burying idols and building families only happens in the Old Testament with one character, I want you to challenge and push against that.

Because this very same well that Jacob dug with his own hands for the blessing of the building up of his family shows up in John chapter four, where a young lady goes to this well because she's thirsty.

She is not of high regard in her city, which is why she shows up at the time that she shows up. It's why her calendar and scheduling is a little bit busy because of the way that everybody else views her, because of the way that she prioritized her life in the past.

And so she shows up at this well thirsty, not just for water, but for more meaning and more purpose, because the idols that she had in her life allowed for a lifestyle that didn't honor God.

And here she's at the well, and she meets Jesus at Jacob's well, where his family's life was changed.

And now this woman's life was changed because she says, I'm thirsty.

And Jesus says, so am I. I've been working to repair families all day, so I'm a little parched. But I know of a water that is even better than this water.

And so the woman says, sir, you don't even have anything to draw water with. This well is deep. Like, you can't even get this water.

How are you going to offer better water? Where do you get that living water? Are you saying you're better than Jacob who made this well and established his family this way? He gave it. He drank from it himself. And not just him, but like his household, his sons and his livestock.

And Jesus knows that she needs more in her household and more in her heart than just a cup of water.

And so he says to her, the water that I will give to you will become in you a spring of water welling up to give eternal life.

How beautiful is that? He's offering to purify her and wash her garments, if you want to think about it that way. To change her family, to change her past, to drown her sinfulness and see her restored so she can go back to her house and be different.

He's saying your old Shechem life is gone. Your Bethel house of God is here now.

And I am the Jesus who will give you this in grace. And I will give you all the living water that your family needs to be built in a way that's God honoring.

And he changes her life at the same well where Jacob's life was changed.

And he changes her family at the same well where Jacob's family was changed.

Which means you and I have a whole lot of hope this Advent season, this time building up to Christmas, to bury your idols, to build your family in the grace and the peace that only Jesus and his grace can bring.

Because I tell you what, you can bury your idols, but they'll keep coming back.

But with Jesus, he drowns them and he takes away the old household and the things you used to bend your knee to.

And he places himself in the only position, the position of worthiness and honor and glory.

Because he's the source of the water and he's the source of the cleanliness and he is the object of a family's worship.

He buries her sins and your sins and my sins.

And in his resurrection of being lifted up, you get to be lifted up too.

So what does it look like for you in Christ to have your idols moved into their proper position?

I'm not saying you have to stop enjoying football.

I'm not saying you have to stop taking your children and investing in their lives.

I'm not saying that you have to never touch your phone again.

I'm saying that we need to bury these idols and put them in their proper place.

And I'll give you a couple of practical ideas of how you can do this with your family, with your kids or your grandkids.

So maybe than spend a whole lot of time at the altar of ball.

We just put it in its right place.

We bury the ball and we lift up the word.

You know, if one of the big problems was that so many percent of people don't crack this open and teach their family, and they only spend 15 minutes a week on formation and discipleship, maybe it's a good time to see all of those van rides to and from practices as holy moments of discipleship.

I guess what I'm saying is make your Pacifica holy again, but you have a captive audience to do some really serious discipleship, to just memorize one verse of the scriptures and talk about it with your kids in the van on the way to and on the way from practice.

Can you do that church? It's pretty simple, but it makes a big change.

So bury the ball and lift up the word.

And maybe it's high time to just kind of put this in its proper place.

It's good to know what your family's going to do.

So it's not like we're not going to be somewhat busy anymore, but maybe we need to reevaluate the priorities that we have been placing on everything that occupies our time.

And maybe we need to bury that busyness and lift up his presence and just take a look and see when was the last time our family took the Lord's supper together?

That was one of the marks of the early church, that his presence, the special presence of Jesus's grace to actually be the lifeblood of the family.

How often have you prioritized worship so that you could do that?



It's a simple switch.

A couple of things get removed on a Sunday or a Wednesday night and see the presence of Jesus in your life.

That's the very special presence.

There's also a general presence.

You could just go outside and take a walk with your family.

You don't have to schedule it.

You could just say like, hey kids, let's go outside where the sun is and there's clouds and it's a little chilly, but it's okay.

Because we're going to see how magnificent our creator, our father is.

And when we're walking in his house, we can't help but think of the redemption of all things.

But I think this is going to be the hardest, but why don't we just put it in its proper place?

Set a couple of locks on how often you use social media or YouTube and instead we can bury distraction and lift up prayer.

The scriptures say that one of the marks of the early church is that they devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

So what would that look like if you modeled the early church, which by the way, didn't meet in buildings like this?

Do you want to know where the early church met?

In homes just like this.

So what would it look like if your home buried the idols, but built your family on the word, his presence and prayer?

I'd say that looks like a pretty rejuvenated, alive in Christ, blessed family that matters.

Where we get a chance to sit in the house, the Bethel of God, our father, and receive his blessing.

May you, as we lead up to Christmas, remember our father and all that he's done for us in this house.

And may your house look more like his house.

Let's close with a word of prayer.

Jesus, your word is hard sometimes.

And family life is difficult sometimes.

And we would just ask that in our own hearts and in our own houses, you would see your spirit moving to show us our idols so that we can bury them.

And only by your grace and your spirit's work in our families, can we be built stronger and devoted to you.

In this way, we know that our family matters.

And in your name, we pray, amen.