SEVEN KEYS TO FAMILY POWER



BILLY JOE DAUGHERTY

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1

Peter Admonishes the Family To Love

In this hour, we need power to overcome the attacks of the devil against marriages, the home, the family and relationships as never before.

During the last 25 years, we have seen perhaps the greatest social upheaval America has ever witnessed, leaving the most severe damage upon marriages and families. You would have to go back to Civil War days to compare what has happened to our generation—the magnitude of disrupted, torn apart, destroyed families and the people trapped in drugs, alcohol, immorality, crime and violence.

The needs and problems, in a sense, have always been the same, yet we are seeing an acceleration of marriage and family problems in our nation. The good news is, there is an answer, and that answer is found in *God's Word.* That answer is a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In 1 Peter 3, Peter wrote a circulatory letter to Christians who were facing tough times. He gave great encouragement about how to stand against persecution and not give up or lose their testimony.

Peter wrote to families who were in crisis, encouraging them on how to love one another and how to live.

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

1 Peter 3:7-12

Husbands must value their wives as a gift from God and love them in the

same spirit that Christ loves each of us.

In response to the husband's esteem and love for his wife, she should respect and reverence him —"...She notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates, and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly" (Ephesians 5:33, AMP.).

2
Seven Keys To Family Power

I realize, as never before, that we are in a race —the final countdown of the race—and we are in it to win. We are in it to bring lost souls into the Kingdom of God, to win in marriage, home and family relationships.

Paul had something to say about a race, which is applicable to the home and family:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize?

Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.

No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others,

I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

To win over the enemy's attacks against marriages, homes and families in this hour, we must run in such a way as to achieve the prize of the divine purpose and destiny for the marriage, home and family: the peace, harmony, love, acceptance, forgiveness and open communication and respect among family members.

Here are seven specific keys that will enable you to have more of God's power in your family to stand against the onslaughts of the devil and to move into a stance of victory in every realm of life.

1. Pray for one another.

When you pray for one another, you release the power of God.

James 3:16 (KJV) says, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." This verse in the *New International Version* says, "For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."

Prayer will stop anger, strife, envy and even selfish ambition. It is hard to criticize and fight with someone you are praying for at the same time.

You will either stop one or the other. When you determine to pray, somehow your own attitude changes, even if you start out praying sincerely that God would change the other person, because you know they need it the most!!

As you pray, the spirit of prayer gets into you and you begin to realize you have some faults, too. You are changed on the inside as you pray.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 (KJV) says, "...A threefold cord is not quickly broken." When farmers bale hay, they used to bind the bales with a threefold cord of rope. You could snap it if you really tried, but it was very difficult to break. It's much easier to break a twofold cord.

What is the threefold cord he is talking about? Two people together are a twofold cord, but when you bring God into it, it becomes a threefold cord.

Many families are only held together by the mutual love of two people. When one or both of them begin to waver, they are in trouble, but when they bring God on the scene, it adds power to the situation.

Praying for your family members will cause you to love them even more. It will bring your heart back to the home. Sharon and I pray together with our children each night. We have a time of sharing and praying. It is one of the most precious times we have together. Our children pray for the members of Victory Christian Center, and they pray for each other—for bumps, scratches and everything else!

When you pray, you defend one another. Sometimes people find fault with each other, but when you pray, there is a wall of defense built around the family. The principle works in all areas —the home and family, the office, the church.

It is important that we pray for one another in the church. We are bound together through prayer. The family that prays together stays together. The family that doesn't pray in this day and time really doesn't have hope. At best, there will be a cold war existence.

Prayer brings the power of God. It brings the grace, joy, peace, love and victory that are needed. It brings the right attitudes. You can have a lot of things, but if people's attitudes are wrong, then the home can be a living hell and a place of great torment. But when you turn it around, the home can become a place of heaven on earth, where we literally take the glory, peace and joy that are in heaven and bring them to earth through prayer. When Sharon served on jury duty, she was explaining to our son Paul, who was seven years old at the time, what jury duty is. He couldn't quite understand as she explained, "It's a court where you decide whether people are guilty or not." Paul said, "I'm going to pray for you, Mamma, that you won't be guilty!" I quickly said, "Paul, I am agreeing

with you!"

2. Accept one another.

Romans 5:8 (KJV) says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Aren't you glad He didn't wait until we got right? He would still be waiting. He loved us in the condition that we were in!

The world is filled with rejection and judgmentalism. It is filled with critical words and putdowns. In fact, it seems the national pastime in America is cutting down other people. Who can come up with the sharpest remark to put another person down? It is important to be accepted in the family just the way you are.

It is also important that you are received in a church family where, regardless of what you look like or what you wear, whether you are dressed up or dressed down, you are accepted.

In the family, it shouldn't matter if a family member is different. Often, people try to make every family member into a cookie-cutter mold, comparing one with another. Comparison in the home will destroy the esteem of the family members, and it will create inferiority, but when we value each person for who they are, then we will enjoy the differences.

Peter admonishes the husband to live with his wife with knowledge and understanding, because she will have a different viewpoint. Peter talks about the wife being the weaker partner. I don't believe the woman is weaker in a lot of areas. Peter obviously is talking from the physical standpoint, that generally men are built stronger, and there is a divine headship order with the husband as the head of the wife, just as Jesus Christ is the head of the Church.

To live with someone with knowledge can be used with every family member. Expecting a six year old to behave like an eleven year old can put tremendous pressure on that child. Or expecting your husband to be like your father, or your wife to be like your mother, brings unrealistic expectation and pressure.

One famous Methodist pastor said, "Marriage isn't a reformatory! Spouses need to reach out to each other without criticism or reservation."

To live with a mate who does not accept you is a dark valley to walk through. If you want to be accepted, whether it is in your family or outside of your family, then you need to accept others without trying to make them change. We are talking about unconditional love. Many people have "because of love", or "if you do this" love. "If you make an A, if you make a lot of money, if you

succeed in business, if you are a good housekeeper, then I will love you."

Unconditional love accepts you "in spite of." It loves you regardless of the circumstances. That's the way God loved us. The Father gave us the greatest example of acceptance. Jesus told the story about the prodigal son coming home. He loved the prodigal son unconditionally, not "because of," "you measure up," or "if you do this." He received and accepted him just as he was.

When you think about the twelve disciples that Jesus appointed, you realize it was not because of something they had done that Jesus loved and accepted them. They still had problems and difficulties in their lives. One of them was even a traitor, yet Jesus loved him and accepted him. One of them denied Jesus three times. The whole bunch ran away from Jesus at the point of His greatest need; yet Jesus had chosen them, walked with them, encouraged them, stood with them and believed in them. It's good to have someone who believes in you, accepts you and receives you just as you are.

3. Speak good things about each other.

Words have such awesome power to build up or to tear down, to edify or to destroy. The pastime of cutting one another, making cute little remarks about someone's physical appearance, or about their ability, slowly erodes the foundation of a solid marriage or a solid relationship, be it in the church or in the home.

Parents have many times lived to regret the negative words they framed their children with: "spoiled," "rotten," "ruined," or "you are going to go to jail."

Peter says we have been called to inherit a blessing, so we're not to repay evil with evil or insult with insult (1 Peter 3:9). The *King James Version* says, "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing...." *Railing* simply means "negative or putdown words."

We're not to return them or strike back at one another. If people continually depreciate their family members, particularly their husband or wife, they will get to the point where they look at that person and say, "It's not worth living with them anymore." Why? Because they have depreciated all of the value out of that person and out of that relationship. But if you will positively affirm your love and find good things to say, your love for one another will be strengthened.

At a recent Leadership Conference held at our church, a pastor's wife from New Jersey shared about the desperate need for godly examples of marriage and family in the inner city where they pastor. To counteract this situation, her husband edifies her from the pulpit, giving their members a godly example of a

good marriage relationship. She said, "He speaks so well of me that he makes me feel like I wear a size 8, even though I wear a size 16!" That's speaking well of one another.

You may never tell me that I preach a good message, but my wife encourages me every week. It doesn't matter how bad I do or what happens, my wife is an encourager. She comes to all the services, takes notes and cheers me on. It's good to have an encourager.

You may be thinking, "I don't have a mate like that." Then why don't *you* become one like that? Many people want someone else to start first. I say, *be what you want to receive.*

Thank God for encouragers, for those who will speak good things to you and about you!

Sometimes parents will degrade a child or children will degrade their parents, or talk about their "old man." As teenagers, you ought to appreciate your moms and dads. Don't talk badly about them when you're at school with your classmates or other friends. Stand up for them, defend them and tell them, "I love you."

When was the last time you told your children, your mom, your dad, your husband, or your wife, "I love you, and I appreciate you"? Those words are music to anyone's ears! Sometimes men appear to be so macho and cool they wouldn't dare let anything that had any smack of sympathy come out of their lips, but scripture says, "Be sympathetic. Be compassionate. Be humble. Be kindhearted."

It's time to stop the cutting remarks. Don't return insults, but instead, blessing. Peter says if you will bless, you will inherit a blessing. What you sow with your words, you will reap.

4. Have fun with your family.

Some homes are like funeral parlors. The atmosphere is so heavy and somber you would never guess that they believed there was a resurrection. We're not living in the three days before it happened.

Joy is the unmistakable evidence of Christianity. It cannot be manufactured. You can't "can" it, and you can't get it in a can. Some people try to shoot it into their arms, but joy comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ. That joy needs to be in the home throughout the day, at the dinner table, when you are getting ready for the day in the morning or getting ready for bed at night.

Our home is a place of fun and laughter, but it's that way because of a

decision. We realize how important it is, and we enjoy each other.

Our family laughs at all the fun things we have done together. We remember going fishing when Sharon caught a big fish. We put it on a stringer, and the stringer took off, so daddy jumped in with all of his clothes on and rescued it!

We have gone to theme parks, the lake and other places known for family fun and recreation, but you don't have to spend money to have fun. Growing up, I lived halfway between Corny Creek and Froggy Level! Froggy Level was a great place where we went fishing and hunting. I remember going there with a cane pole and some worms we dug in our back yard. We spent time fishing and then went swimming in Corny Creek. Great memories!

Several years ago, it was predicted that America would go to a four-day work week. Instead, many have gone to a six-day work week. People have become workaholics and are driven by material things. They can't get enough with their regular hours, so they add more on, which takes away from the family.

We need to enjoy life. Remember, God rested on the sabbath day. There needs to be a day or a time for rest and recreation with your family. The idea of Shabbat, the Jewish sabbath, was that it was a day of rest and a day of jubilee and celebration for the family.

5. Reconcile your differences.

The prayers of people who argue, fuss and fight and don't settle their differences will be hindered. Your prayers will be stopped if there is strife in the home. *You cannot overcome by your confession what you have destroyed with your actions.* People will confess prosperity and blessing, but if their actions are full of strife and bitterness, their actions will destroy their confession.

It's like people confessing prosperity, but they aren't givers. It won't work. You must plant the seed, do the action and then your confession over your action will cause it to come to pass. So it is in the family. Don't allow strife and anger to stop the power of God.

Peter said, "...Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech" (1 Peter 3:10).

One of the things that is absolutely vital to reconcile differences is the ability to say, "I was wrong. Please forgive me." Some people will say, "If I was wrong, I'm sorry." Hey, good buddy, you didn't bless anybody! It was your fault, too. To have a healing effect, the attitude of the heart must be that of humility.

Proverbs 13:10 says, "Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in

those who take advice." In other words, it is *pride* which causes strife. Pride is what caused Satan to start the first war in heaven. He wanted his way because he was selfish.

Many people have said, "Communication is a problem in our marriage." Others say, "Sex is a problem." Still others blame the marriage problems on finances. Pride and selfishness—people wanting their own way—cause problems in all the areas. The root, that which goes down the deepest, is people demanding their own rights and wanting their own way.

I have heard John Osteen talk about obeying the scripture, "...Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Ephesians 4:26). When he was upset with Dodie and had gone across town to do something, he said, "Just as the sun was starting to go down, I'd drive like crazy to go to Dodie and say, 'Please forgive me.'" It's wonderful to be able to say, "I was wrong. Please forgive me." It is the healing balm that binds together.

When our children get upset with each other, I'll say, "All right, tell them you are sorry." I will sit down with them and work to get their hearts right. Then I'll say, "Now, kiss them on the nose." When they have to kiss each other on the nose, they always get tickled.

6. Communicate.

To communicate is to mutually understand one another, and it is both verbal and nonverbal. People communicate by their actions and tone of voice. When you listen to a person's tone of voice, you will recognize what is being said as well as what isn't being said. The tone of voice can speak louder than the words.

Communication is *listening attentively.* I had to learn to listen more effectively to my wife. I grew up in an athletic world, hunting and fishing, like many guys. Communication is more than a grunt or a nod. I had to learn to talk and open up, like a lot of men need to open up and share.

In many families, communication is on a surface level. "How's the weather? Is the car running good?" They talk about things that have no meaning as far as the depth of relationship. They think because they talk about those things, they are communicating, but communication has to do with what you feel deeply in your heart. It has to do with the thoughts that are inside of your mind. It has to do with your perception about what is priority and about what God is saying.

Communication is being able to listen to a person, hear their heart and

understand them so that your word ministers and edifies.

Communication breaks down because of pride, which often results in an argument that separates. The healing process begins with humility. The restoration process—the ability to talk and listen—happens with diligence.

7. Invest yourself.

In a sense, you could say, all that I have shared is an investment, but I have listed it separately because there are several other things that fall under it.

Two thousand years ago, people were aware of the terms: sowing seeds, the blade, the ear and the full corn in the ear. In our day and time, a highly technological society, we are familiar with investments, whether it is in a savings and loan, in a corporation, in stocks, or in land.

People invest in something they know about. Secondly, people invest in something they deem to be a place that will bring a return.

What area has the potential to give more pleasure than the family? What area gives people the potential for more pain than the family? It is the one area that people can be hurt the most, because they haven't made the proper investments.

When people get old and retire, they often say, "I wish I had spent more time with my family." You don't hear them say, "I wish I had spent more time in the office."

Why get to the end of your life, look back and regret the lack of time with your family and loved ones? It's not too late to change. Begin *now* to invest more into your family.

What should you invest?

Invest your time. Love is spelled T-I-M-E.

Invest your energy. Many times people give all their energy to their employment and to others, even in their recreation. They give it to other people instead of to their family. When it comes to their family, they are completely worn out.

It's amazing how people get motivated to do what they want to do. You can say to some women who are all worn out, "Let's go to the Mall." It's like adrenalin jumps inside of them! Or you can say to some men who are all worn out, "Let's go play some golf," or "Let's go fishing," and suddenly they are energized. If we will pray, energy will come into us for our families!

Invest your creativity. People have all types of creativity on their job, but when it comes to their family and marriage, sometimes it's as dull and boring as

can be. Nothing ever changes. It's in a rut of nothingness. We need to bring God's creativity into all of our activities, into our prayer time, into our recreation and into our vacation time.

We need to make an investment of creativity in the home, the marriage, the family, the children, the mother and father.

Invest your love. People's affections are often on things rather than upon people. It's time to change that and place our affection first upon Jesus Christ and then upon each other.

Colossians 3:1,2 says:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

With our focus continually upon You, Lord, help us to invest ourselves in others through edifying and uplifting words and actions.

3
Replacing Selfishness With Servanthood

James hits the nail on the head as far as the root cause of the problems in the home today which weakens, and in some cases even destroys, family power.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

James 4:1

In other words, *selfishness* is behind all the fights and quarrels.

You want something but don't get it.

You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight You do not have, because you do not ask God.

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:23

We have a world filled with people who are trying to find fulfillment out of things that provide no fulfillment. A husband or wife's fulfillment is not in their mate. If it is, they have set themselves up for a great disappointment, because it's not within the power of a human being to fully satisfy another person. But when you put God first, the mate and children can add to your life. Only Christ alone can fully satisfy your life.

I believe the key problem weakening family power is the works of the flesh. You could call it *sin,* the essence of which is pride and selfishness. "I want my way, and I want it now." Out of pride, selfishness and sin come the works of the flesh. The flesh must be crucified, which comes by a *decision* to kill it!

Think about the works of the flesh: "...Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like..." (Galatians 5:1921).

Paul said, "...Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16).

Genuine love for others, involving an attitude of servanthood, is the force that will alleviate selfishness. Agape love is blessing another person at your own expense, while lust is gratifying self at the expense of another person. Marriages

that are birthed in lust rather than in the God-kind of love are set up for a knockout by the devil.

You have to apply the sword of the Spirit— God's Word—to deny the flesh, where you tell your old selfishness, "I'm not going to be selfish. I'm not going to live in that realm."

One aspect of a servant heart is that you not hold on to resentments, such as, "You didn't take out the trash five years ago." If you have that problem in your home, it might be worth taking the steps to take the trash out yourself. Who cares who takes the trash out as long as it gets done?

Sharon does the laundry in our home, but there are times when I put the wash in and take the clothes out of the dryer. There's nothing wrong with doing it. The children and I help with the dishes. There's nothing wrong with a man washing dishes. I'm talking about a flexibility so we can flow and adjust to one another—a willingness to change and adapt.

We have a couple in our church who had a major disagreement in their home because the husband couldn't remember to put gas in the vehicles. Whenever he went anywhere, he would take the vehicle with the most gas and leave the other one for his wife. After several times of running out of gas and laying him out with her words, she finally solved the problem. She began to gas up the vehicles herself without complaint. Her actions convicted him and awakened him to his responsibility.

Many wars in the home have begun over such trivialities as how the tube of toothpaste has been rolled. I'm talking about selfishness that must be removed and worked out in a practical way to preserve the family power God has planned for your marriage and home.

Paul said something which applies to the marriage, home and family as much as it applies to every member of the Body of Christ.

...Serve one another in love.

The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Galatians 5:13-15

If self is not ruled and dominated by the Holy Spirit, it will rise up and demand its own way. Proverbs 16:32 (AMP.) says, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, he who rules his [own] spirit than he who takes a city."

It takes more to control your own spirit than it does for a military genius to

win a war, because the inward man is more difficult to conquer. However, the good news is, the flesh can be conquered by the power of the Holy Spirit!

It's time to put selfishness to death and take on an attitude of servanthood, which will greatly enhance family harmony and power!

Personal Prayer of Commitment

Father, I need Your help to make me the person I should be with the family You have given me—both at home and in the Body of Christ. I now recognize that the first step to healing in my family is to humble myself and make a fresh commitment to Your Son, Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, I do believe You died, You won a triumphant victory over Satan as You descended into the depths of hell for all mankind, You were resurrected and You now sit at the right hand of the Father. I accept Your completed work at Calvary on my behalf, Lord Jesus. I believe with my heart that You are the Son of God and I confess with my mouth that You are my Lord and Savior.

Father, help me to understand and put action to my role in the family as You have ordained it. Help me to pray for those in my family, in the Body of Christ and for those who are lost. Teach me how to accept and love others unconditionally, just as You do, Lord Jesus. Teach me to speak good things about others, to support them by speaking Your Word over them. Remove from me any criticalness or judgmentalism, Father.

Lord, teach me to have fun with my family. Teach me how to properly reconcile differences. I repent of selfishness which demands its own way. Teach me how to communicate, not only with my family, but with You, Lord.

I make a fresh commitment today, Lord, to invest myself in my family and in my church family. Lead me in the path You have ordained for me, and help me to grow up spiritually in You, Lord, through the Word, through prayer, through fellowship with the Body of Christ, through sharing and through praise and worship of You, Lord.

Thank You, Father, for allowing this day to be a fresh, new beginning in my life!

Signature _____ Date _____



BILLY JOE DAUGHERTY is founder and pastor of Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Victory has a Christian school, Bible Institute and Missions Training Center. Other Victory outreaches include taking the gospel via radio and television to North America, along with shortwave radio and television to other nations, plus the distribution of books, tapes, and videos. He and his wife, Sharon, minister God's healing, saving, and delivering power as a team. Their family works alongside them in the ministry.