

Welcome everyone – to our guests, especially, and also to those watching at Shelby Street and online. My name is Shan. We just finished a series called “All,” in which we looked at how practically to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Today we take that a different direction and start a new series called “All In.” The question is whether we are ALL IN—are we committing our lives to what matters most? Next week, we will look at what it means to be ALL IN in our marriages, though there will be clear application for those that are not married. After that we will look at if we are ALL IN on our relationship with God and if we are ALL IN for the kingdom of God. Today we’ll examine whether we’re ALL IN with our families.

Can you relate to any of these quotes?

- “Families are like fudge – mostly sweet, with a few nuts.”
- “I saw a store that has a sign that reads, ‘We treat you like family!’ Yup, not going in there.”
- “My family is temperamental—half temper, half mental.”
- “‘Well, that escalated quickly’ is our family motto.”
- “Some call it chaos; we call it family.”
- “Remember, as far as anyone knows, we are a nice, normal, family.”

As I have thought about my family, I know I was very blessed growing up. On my mom’s side I had four aunts who loved me very much and cousins that I got to play with, plus a grandfather and his brothers who allowed me to help them bring in the hay. My job was to stomp on the hay to make sure it was firmly in place on the trailer. I think they may have made up that job, but I was very proud of my accomplishments. My grandmother made amazing chocolate chip cookies and loved doing things with us—until *Days of Our Lives* came on, and then it was quiet time. On my dad’s side, I had one aunt. I enjoyed visiting the dairy farm and my grandmother made delicious blackberry pie. My grandfather passed before I was born.

Our families are important. Some of you have very few good memories of your family and some in this room have been damaged by the words and/or actions of family. If this is the case, please seek godly healing of those wounds. Our staff, small group leaders, porch staff, and many others would love to pray through that with you and get you started on a healthy path. There is no doubt that God wants that to be the case. “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11).

It’s a rough time for families. Families are divided on faith, on vaccine mandates, on acceptable news sources, on social media, on political parties and politicians, on financial decisions, on where Thanksgiving and Christmas will be celebrated, on how to discipline the kids, on when to see the grandparents, and on whether the family will be Star Wars or Star Trek fans.

How about the division in families caused by the pain of divorce, jealousy and pain caused by step-families, disagreements over how to care for aging parents, abandonment, alcoholism, drug use, violence, verbal abuse, adultery, mental illness, career disagreements, children of various ages turning their back on the family, on God, on all that you believed you had raised them to believe and know?

Leo Tolstoy wrote, “Happy families are all alike, but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” How do we fix it? We can’t, but God can.

If you have a piece of paper or a device that you can type on, please take a moment right now to list the names of your living family members. You need to have those names in front of you. It doesn’t matter what the state of the relationship is, just list the names. For some of you the list will be very short. For a few of you out there, this could take a long time.

While you do that, let me show you my list of my living family members:

Dad—John	Cousins—Heidi, Julie, Brett & Sonya
Mom—Jan	Mother-in-law—Mary Belle
Wife—Lise	Sister-in-law—Debbie
Sons—Will and Jack	Nephew—Andrew
Sister & brother-in-law—Jennifer & Darren	Niece & her husband—Sara & Michael
Aunts—Joan, Sandy and Debbie	Brother-in-law—Steve

This is who I’m thinking about today as we go through this.

You see, you get to choose your job. You get to choose your friends. But your family, they are who they are.

There are lots of messed up families in Scripture—just look at Joseph who was sold into slavery by his own brothers, who also made his parents believe he was dead. That’s messed up! If many—and there are many—of the best known families in the Bible can’t get family right, give yourself a break. Realize God rescues families and intends good to come from rescued families and relationships.

So how does God tell us to live with the people on our lists? Let’s talk about six things for you to improve on or introduce to your life for the first time.

### **1. Family are to make a deep commitment to one another.**

Members of strong families have difficulties, disagreements, and “stuff,” just like everyone else does. They get laid off from work and can’t find a job. They struggle to make ends meet. Kids and parents don’t see eye to eye.

What sets them apart is that they don’t give up on each other when circumstances get strained and ugly, or when one or more family members disappoint and let them down. They have a

steady and unwavering dedication to each other—a commitment to stay together—through good times and bad. No family member ever feels like they don't belong.

In Luke 15, we read of the love of the father for his prodigal son, who he loves no matter what. This is the love of parents who sit behind their son or daughter in court when they have been found guilty of some horrible crime. The parents do not approve of the crime, but they are totally committed to loving their child. Their love is unconditional.

God calls us to this love and links it to our very love for him: “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (1 John 4:20).

## **2. Family are to make time together a priority.**

For immediate family, long workweeks, school activities, sports, band, and household chores, can make family time hard to find. For extended family, busy holiday seasons, long drives or flights, and the speed of life make time with family hard to come by.

Still, healthy families always find time to be together, no matter how busy they think they are, even if some of that time is communicating with each other from one screen to another. When we spend quality time together as a family, we express by our actions that we value and care about each other. This helps build and strengthen family bonds.

Friday night used to be my favorite night of the week because Lise, Jack, Will and I would sleep together in the living room. We would play games, eat pizza, watch a movie, and fall asleep near each other on the floor.

It was horrible for my back, and I desperately miss it. I miss the peace and familiarity of that time with family—but as always happens, life circumstances change, and that's natural. Family time can mean engaging in shared activities like pizza and movie night, eating meals together and making meals together, playing games, going for a walk, watching sports together, or playing disc golf together—but it doesn't have to.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). These verses tell me that God wants us to talk about Him and His Word, but it also implies that this takes place when we are simply together. Are we together, without distractions like TV, headphones, video games, and smart phones?

Here's a reminder to parents—if your family is too busy to spend time together, it is your responsibility for the betterment of your family to take action and make difficult and unpopular decisions. The real key to building relationships is to spend time together in all types of circumstances, including everyday normal activities.

### **3. Family are to honor and show appreciation for each other.**

How do we honor each other?

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers [and I would add mothers], do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4)

In other words—kids, obey your parents until you are out of the house and then continue to honor them the rest of your life because of the role they play in your life and their love for you. Parents, don’t create resentment in your children. As parents we are to train our children to distinguish right from wrong in everyday life, but this training should take place within the context of a loving, caring, forgiving relationship.

God has some pretty harsh words for children and parents who don’t honor each other: “He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction” (Malachi 4:6).

Family members also honor each other by never speaking ill of each other publicly. We are not only to honor each other, we are also to show appreciation to each other in a family. This includes sharing appreciation both verbally and with meaningful gestures such as flowers, meal preparation, notes, foot rubs. I’ve been trying to get my sons to cut my toe nails for years in order to show me that they love me—but thus far they have chosen other methods of showing me appreciation.

But appreciation shouldn’t be limited to just showing gratefulness. Let family members know how special they are. Tell your spouse, kids, parents, and siblings how special they are. Tell them what qualities you most value in them. Praise their strengths and accomplishments. Let them know you enjoy spending time with them and tell them you love them often. Done sincerely, expressions of love, honor, and appreciation deepen the relationship between family members and strengthen the family.

### **4. Family are to look out for one another.**

A healthy family treats each member as they would like to be treated. Jesus himself taught “in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

We call this the Golden Rule, but have you heard of the Golden Result? The Golden Result says that other people will usually (not always) treat you the way you treat them. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

When we treat our family members in a selfless way, this creates an atmosphere in which each family member feels loved and is inspired to work for the good of the family. This also means that we have a responsibility to help meet the needs—emotional, physical, and spiritual—of those in our family. 1 Timothy 5:8 is a tough verse: “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” This is rough, as we are asked to take care of the needs (not wants) of those we are to be committed to.

Sometimes this means paying some bills for someone or getting them to a doctor’s appointment. Sometimes it is much simpler, like a wife giving up her tea and Shakespeare in order to go to a baseball game with her husband and boys—just as an example. Or maybe it’s a dad ignoring what he would like to do on his day off in order to take his kids to do something that brings them joy. Again, as Paul said in Philippians 2, value others above yourself and look to the interests of others.

### **5. Family are to resolve conflict quickly and in a God-honoring way.**

Rarely do we mean to do it, but often we offend and hurt those that we are closest to. Here is the challenge: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” Romans 12:18.

Misunderstandings are a normal part of family life. But if the family members do not make sincere peace with each other, this can lead to bitterness and grudges on both sides. Communication and respect begin to erode and the family bond gets weaker and weaker. When offenses occur in healthy families, bad feelings are not allowed to be undiscussed and undealt with for very long. Conflicts are resolved quickly. Apologies need to be made quickly and forgiveness granted or at least talked about because some wounds are deeper than others. Things get talked out without family members attacking each other personally, but while still addressing the issues.

Every family member must show grace, but the parents or grandparents must set the tone in the home for apologies, taking responsibility, and being role models of what healthy communication and conflict skills look like.

### **6. Family are to always focus on Jesus first.**

The most cohesive element of family is a shared commitment to Jesus. “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act” (Psalm 37:5). When individual family members learn to love God, respect His laws, and follow biblical instructions, they will be close. They have a reason to work at their relationships and are more likely to stay together. They are able to put trials and difficulties into perspective and maintain the right focus. God’s Word provides guidelines for living, which helps families create a positive home life.

Of course, to be a spiritually committed family, parents must set the pace and reflect their commitment to God in their personal lives. If your younger kids see you studying your Bible, serving others, and obeying God’s commands, and if you talk about God’s way of life as you go through your day-to-day activities together, they will know that God is your top priority. A key

sign that God is moving is when the hearts of parents and children and grandparents are turned to one another.

Let me show you a video of a family from The Creek that is trying to live out these commitments. (To view the video, watch the online sermon.)

When she was out of the hospital, she had headaches which lasted the rest of her life, but she was very clear that she would do the same thing over and over again to save her son and a good friend.

This is a great representation of the Gospel message, the good news that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to die for our sins and be resurrected to new life so we could be reconciled to God and enjoy him forever, live in peace with those around us, and experience increasingly fulfilling relationships.

In Philippians 3:8-9, Paul proclaims the centrality of the gospel—the cross—to life:

I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

If the gospel is central—to the point that all else is garbage—it also must be central in my marriage and in my family. It requires that we be ALL IN with both our family and our faith. The world needs to see families from the church love each other in ways that are dynamic and compelling and better than the world has to offer.

May your family and mine find ourselves nestled in this gospel, and looking forward to the triumphant return of Jesus to earth to take us home.

**Resources:**

All Scripture NIV

*7 Characteristics of Healthy Families*, Becky Sweat

*Characteristics of the Christian Family*, studyjesus.com

*10 Ideas: Living the Gospel in Your Home*, Janel Breitenstein

*The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande