

## *Deeply Rooted in Each Other*

### **KICK-START WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PARENTS**

- There are no perfect families, so give yourself a break and believe that God can work with your family story--whether it's a constant drama, a gut-splitting comedy, a royal tragedy, or a pretty ho-hum *Reader's Digest* version of family.
- "I was wrong" and "Please forgive me" are two of the most important sentences family members can learn to say to each other.
- Make time for playing together and sharing food together. Feeling good has a powerful effect on our relationships.

### **FRAMING UP OUR PURPOSE**

When we think of a family tree, we think about all the different branches of people and stories that we can trace. But what if we help our teens think of their family tree as the fruit of an unseen root system? It's a tricky picture to paint, because every generation is a branch off of another generation. But every generation also has the potential to put down deep, enduring roots for the next generation. The whole idea is to be able to see where our family is rooted and to recognize when and if we need to be replanted in healthier relationships with each other. See if these ideas can help you communicate and work out a family story that is growing toward God's best for all of you.

God calls us to be deeply rooted in Him and with each other.

*"Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing." --1 Peter 3:8, 9*

Everyone plays a role in the family. There are birth-order tendencies, gender differences, and personality traits that all come into play. Family is a micro-community that has macro impact on how we see and respond to our world. Here are some questions that might help you and your teen (or your whole family) identify how to be more deeply rooted in each other.

- What's my job in the spiritual community of my family?
- How will I do that job well in my relationships with siblings and parents?
- What does it mean to be called to live a certain way?
- How can that make a difference in my family?
- Deep roots produce strength, fruit, and shelter for generations.

*"Thus were the visions of my head on my bed: I saw, and behold, a tree in the middle of the earth; and its height was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and its height reached to the sky, and its sight to the end of all the earth. The leaves of it were beautiful, and its fruit much, and in it was food for all: the animals of the field had shadow under it, and the birds of the sky lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it." --Daniel 4:10-12*

The tree that Daniel sees in his dream is a magnificent sight. It is strong and beautiful. But what makes it a remarkable tree is not just what it looks like but also what it produces: fruit, shelter, and a place to come together. That is such a wonderful picture of a strong family. You can use this verse to ask your teen to evaluate your family tree. What does your family tree have in common with this picture of a magnificent tree? What doesn't your family tree reflect in this scripture? What small or big things could help your family produce the kind of fruit and shelter that this tree provides?

Deeply rooted families can withstand the powerful storms that come.

*"...For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God will call to himself." --Acts 2:39*

*"Has his loving kindness vanished forever? Does his promise fail for generations?" --Psalm 77:8*

*"For Yahweh is good. His loving kindness endures forever, his faithfulness to all generations." --Psalm 100:5*

We've already established that no family tree is the perfect family tree. God understands that sometimes we mess up the family system. He

understands that sometimes someone else messes it up for us. Part of our deep-rootedness is to actively trust that God wants to bless our siblings, grandkids, great-nephews, long-lost 3rd cousins twice removed, and everyone else in our families through the

promise He first gives to us. Those we love may be far off, but God still knows where they are, and His arm of grace extends that far. We may have endured some terrible storms and felt ourselves bent almost as far as we can bend without breaking, but we can hold onto the promise that his lovingkindness keeps us from being uprooted.

Many of those kinds of storms can happen during the turbulent adolescent years. Tangible encounters with grace, forgiveness, healthy conflict, and restoration will help your teen eventually trust these promises. It's also important to allow grief and disappointment to run their course. Just because we believe that God has not abandoned us during our storms doesn't mean we can't admit that it certainly feels like He has vanished during those times.

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## **IDEAS FOR GROWING DEEP ROOTS IN OUR FAMILY**

- Do family reviews. Reminisce about fun; retell stories that bring a smile.
- Sibling rivalry is obviously normal, but you still play a role in refereeing teachable moments.
- Encourage your teen to make a coupon book of activities and treats they are willing to redeem for a younger sibling.
- Eat dinner together often. This is a lost family art in our busy lives.
- Cook with your teen, and let them pick the recipe to tackle.
- Work in the yard together planting and cultivating; create a garden together.
- Show up for each others' big stuff. There's nothing like a family cheering section!
- Do a family mission trip together instead of a theme park vacation.