

3 Precious Principles for Building a Positive Family Culture

Our granddaughter Selah just celebrated her sixth birthday. During Selah's party, her friends and family affirmed her. Her brother said she was "sweet, fun and precious." Her cousins mentioned "kind" and "funny," and others mentioned "compassionate, patient, creative, joyful and passionate." As I was listening to Selah's party guests, I watched her face and how she simply sparkled as the words were spoken to her.

I left the party reflecting on how important it is for people to receive affirmation and encouragement, especially within family life. All of us have family. A positive family culture is so life-giving! God calls each of us to shape the culture of our families. This is why the writer of Proverbs wrote, "Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands" (Prov. 14:1).

So how do you build a positive family culture? Here are a few ideas. And, by the way, these same principles apply if you're trying to build a positive culture in your workplace.

- **Take Negativity Outside:** Recently, I was visiting with a friend, and my friend told me that when she and her husband received marriage counseling many years ago, the pastor told them whenever they had an argument, they should take it outside their home. So whenever she and her husband argued, they would go for a walk. Whether it was 70 degrees or 25 degrees, arguing happened outside and not inside their home. What a great idea!! The culture of your family is more caught than taught, so try your best to keep negativity outside!
- **Listen to Find Feelings:** When a member of your family is

hurting or angry, pause and offer understanding. It's easy in the chaotic business of life to miss how family members are feeling. Ask God to make you attentive to the feelings of others. Jesus modeled empathy when He stood at the grave of Lazarus with tears streaming down His face. He felt with them. When someone is angry, the temptation is to become defensive and miss the feelings driving the anger. Put the pause in and try to imagine what it would be like to be in the other person's shoes. If you listen for feelings, you might discover the conflict is more easily solved. Solomon wisely advised us to listen before answering (see Prov. 18:13). If you put the pause in and listen for feelings, the culture of your family life will be far more positive.

- **Practice Gentleness:** Our culture often values snarkiness. But sarcasm and snarky responses often don't build others up. Children and elderly relatives especially need gentleness. It's not helpful to speak harshly. This is why Solomon wrote, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1). Watch the evening news, and you'll hear plenty of harsh words. You don't need that harshness as a part of the culture of your family or work place. Instead, ask God to develop gentleness in your life. No one wins in a harsh culture. This is why the apostle Paul wrote, "Let everyone come to know your gentleness" (Phil. 4:5). If you're up for a challenge, you could ask those closest to you if they perceive you as gentle.

Questions to consider: *What was the culture like in the home in which you grew up? Is that a culture you'd like to pass on? Why or why not?* {eo}

Becky Harling, an author, certified speaker, leadership coach and trainer with the John Maxwell Team, is an energetic and motivational international speaker inspiring audiences to overcome their greatest life challenges and reach their full

God-given potential. Her most recent book is How to Listen So People Will Talk. Her husband, Steve Harling, is the president of Reach Beyond, a nonprofit organization seeking to be the voice and hands of Jesus around the world. Connect with Becky at , Facebook or Twitter.

This article originally appeared at .