

Retreat based on Impacting your Family

Instructions.

1. These talks would be totally different if given by a former incarcerated person since they would have in-prison background. That would be ideal; obviously that won't happen often and the in-prison focus then has to come from the discussion and questions that follow the talks.
2. There are probably folks in your prison who have no family, and then another set that has no children. Under regular circumstances, those folks might feel excluded with this topic, so the goal would be to have them together in a group and then their focus would have to be on 'creating a family inside the prison' or 'who is your family?' or "who can I be a father figure or mentor for?"
3. Ask the Chaplain about Kairos Outside applications- can you take them in, have them filled out and can you then carry them out and mail them. Do some team training about Kairos Outside... this is the best form of help we can give to families. Do your homework. Perhaps even have someone come in at the end to speak about Kairos Outside... or even better, if a person in your prison has been impacted by a loved one going to Kairos Outside, have them speak.
4. Talks are to be about 10-15 minutes long, based on personal stories and experiences. The talks are to be followed by a discussion time (15-30 minutes) and a prayer time with prayer based on what people have shared.

Leader's opening remarks:

Welcome:

Arrange in small groups:

Logistics of day:

Here is what is going to happen today.... We are going to hear some talks. The talks will be a witness from the speaker out of the experiences of their own life and their family. Each of the speakers didn't know the topic until we met last night and no one knew who was even going to talk til our meeting. Therefore what will be said hasn't been rehearsed and made perfect. I hope each will be sharing about their struggles and successes to walk with Christ...and you will see their hearts.

Talks will be followed by a discussion time in your group. I ask that each of you participate and share with the others in your group how you feel about what the speaker said. How does it hit you in your attempt to walk with Jesus in prison? Then you will have about 10 minutes to talk and pray with your prayer partner. I know this freaks some of you out... but I ask that you do this and see what happens no matter if it makes you uncomfortable. This is the safest place to be inside the fence. These are the safest people to be with... I hope!

The topic of today is “how you can positively impact your family.” Hopefully you have changed as a result of Kairos. Hopefully you have come to a place where you want to heal some of your important relationships that got messed up. The forgiveness ceremony during your Kairos weekend had the power to start some healing inside you. Perhaps it is now time to use that experience to help others around you.

What came to mind when I mentioned family?

Probably a lot of things, right? Some of you have great families, some of you have no family...and a lot of you are somewhere in-between. It might be different if you have kids verses not having kids. Some of you are in here because of your family and their influence on you. Some of you are here despite their influence on you. Today we need to talk about what you can do to help them, and in turn help you.

I know that support is an important factor for incarcerated individuals, especially from family members. Family involvement is a large factor in rehabilitation. Family can actually thrive when they can adapt to you being in here, but it takes your help. It takes you being proactive and it will take communication on your part. You are a major key in making it happen. Therefore we want to help you help your family... whatever your family looks like.

Talking points before finishing:

1. Talk about family even if yours is messed-up! Most of ours are messed up!
2. Talk about how family can possibly be anyone you choose to include... which will help include those people who aren't married or don't have kids.
3. Talk about how our 'ideal' picture of family in most cases isn't obtainable.

Let's pray and then we will have the first talk about how you can Impact Your Family...

1st Talk. God loves you.

In God's eyes we are loveable, full of dignity, worthy of being loved. He rejoices over you, and sent His son to die in exchange for your sins. He desires to spend eternity hanging out with you.

No one can do the things God does. Period. If you believe that God is the creator of all things, that would, by default, include you and me. In Genesis 1, God said that He created humans in his own image. He created them to be like himself.... Then He said that everything He created is good... and that the humans he created were VERY good. That means that you are special and loved by God.

Even if you don't believe that God could ever love you because of what you have done, God has said just the opposite. You have to somehow resolve that in your head and heart. What seems better... to believe *your thinking* or to believe *God*? I would suggest that you believe God more than yourself.

One of the most important things for you to do in becoming a person who wants better for your life and family is to figure out who you are in relationship with God. I'm not saying that is easy...especially if you have a lot of years of practice believing the wrong thing. You have probably spent a lot of time practicing being a certain way... and with that much practice, you probably have become pretty good at thinking you are not worthy of God's love, or that you aren't good enough, or you are just a mess. Practice makes perfect, you know. I want to challenge you now to be changed by a new way of thinking. No one made this up, God himself said... He loves you and he loved you while you were still a mess and sinning and hated Him. Think about that for a while!

Things to talk about:

1. How did you realize that God loved you? How hard was it? Were people involved, scripture involved, a circumstance perhaps?
2. How do you combine the thoughts of being a mess in your own eyes with what God has said about you? Was it hard to agree with God who He thinks that you are?
3. How has this revelation changed you?

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think it means to be created in the image and likeness of God?
2. Do you believe that God loves you?
3. How have experiences in your life made you feel distant and alienated from God and that there is no way He loves you?
4. How did your feelings of shame affect your relationship with God? What do you want to do about it?

2nd Talk. Roles of a Godly man.

The list of roles of men could be pretty long. It would include our role in our relationship with God, with your family, with others and with what you do and how you do it every day. There isn't much else left if you think about it! This could include your role as a husband, as a father, as a grandfather, as a son, as a brother, an uncle, an employee, and a friend. Some of you might be all of those or a few of those. No matter what, your role in every relationship is important.

Let's first talk about relationship with your father and mother and how important that is. God said: **Exodus 20:12** "Honor your father and mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

That verse says that there are benefits to honoring your mother and father. BUT...you may have been abandoned or abused. Maybe you were verbally assaulted and forced to fearfully run and hide. Or perhaps there is a history of bitterness and grudges between you and your parents. In any case, when you hear the phrase "honor your parents," your stomach turns just thinking about paying tribute to someone who has treated you poorly.

It's not easy to honor someone who has hurt you so deeply. The natural tendency is to repay evil for evil and seek retribution.

But Peter tells us Christians to live "not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9). The Bible challenges us regularly in this area: Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, turn the other cheek, and so on. In Matthew 5:44-47, Jesus asked if you only love the people that love you, then where is your reward? How are you any different than the heathens?

Love for a hurtful parent or a hurtful spouse or a hurtful anybody doesn't come from our own abilities. It comes from the supernatural love of Jesus who died for us even while we were undeserving sinners (Romans 5:8). Through the power of the Holy Spirit we *can* choose to love those who we feel don't deserve it. Jesus set an example that seems to be a pretty good one.

You may feel that by honoring your parent, you are excusing their behavior. But remember that no evil will escape God's eyes or go unpunished. Romans 12:19 says, "Never take your own revenge, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." You need to honor your parents not because you think they deserve it, but because God asked you to. By doing so, you honor God by keeping His commandments. Start praying now for supernatural strength to figure this out.

Things to talk about:

1. Talk about how easy it is to hurt those closest to you and if you have an example, how to attempt to fix some past hurts.
2. it is easy to run and hide if life is full of conflict with people, but ignoring it will just keep you smack in the middle of the conflict.
3. Talk about how conflict is contrary to how Christ wants us to live.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have experiences in your past life made you feel and how have they defined who you are today?
2. Do you want that to have a different ending than beginning?
3. If you are a parent, do you parent like your mom and dad? Is that good or bad?
4. Who do you need to be different to and show love and maybe do the hard work of fixing a relationship?

3rd Talk – What is the best way for a man to help his family - and if you don't have a family, other people?

If I were to ask the question ‘how can I help my family?’ there would a lot of answers. Probably the most important answer is to become the best follower of Jesus you can. Walking with Jesus makes you different than before. You aren't perfect, you still have hard times, you still have the ability to drive people close to you crazy and hurt them. But...when you see your family through the eyes of Jesus, things change!

Chances are you have hurt your family by coming here. You have made their life tough and have pulled the rug out from under them. I am sure there are some odd feelings in them and in you. You need to realize that and make the decision to help them.

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

“Act justly” would have been understood by Micah's audience as living with a sense of right and wrong. Do you live that way? Do you know what is right and do it?

“Love mercy” contains the Hebrew word *hesed*, which means loyal love or loving-kindness. God expected His people to show love and to be loyal, just as He had been loyal to them ([Micah 2:8-9](#); [3:10-11](#); [6:12](#)). Are you loyal to your family?

“Walk humbly” is a description of the heart's attitude toward God. God's people depend on Him rather than their own abilities ([Micah 2:3](#)). Instead of taking pride in what we bring to God, we humbly recognize that no amount of personal sacrifice can replace a heart committed to justice and love.

The response of a godly heart is outward (do justice), inward (love mercy), and upward (walk humbly).

Things to talk about:

1. How a man's walk with Jesus can and should impact his family, give the family stability, help the kids, etc.
2. How has/does your Walk impact your family? If it hasn't always been that way, what changed and what was the outcome?
3. Tell examples of acting justly, loving mercy, walking humbly with your God....

Discussion Questions:

1. How did your feelings of shame affect your relationship with God and others in your family?
2. How do you wish things were different between you and family members?
3. Do you act justly? Are you loyal?
4. Are you humble in your dealings with others, especially your family members? How can you display humility to those you love?

Talk #4 Fathering from the Inside or Mentoring in here

Some of you might not be fathers...and just want to nod off about now saying this doesn't apply to me. Wrong. One big thing a dad does is mentor kids. You can mentor someone in here. Who? (think about it for a second and I bet someone came to mind). Now that we are all on the same page, what do you do?

Here are some ideas to weave into this talk. Obviously there are way too many to use them all. Choose wisely and from your own life:

1. Don't provoke your children (Ephesians 6:4)

The alternative, the scripture suggests, is to raise them to be young people of faith.

2. Be your child's First Teacher (Proverbs 22:6)

It's our responsibility to "train up a child in the way he/she should go." Not the school, not the government, but you need to be teaching and training them. If you don't someone else is going to and it might not end up well.

3. Dads need to exemplify a good life (2 Cor. 3: 2-3)

Scripture teaches that who we are and how we live is like a letter from God. Our kids read that letter, every day.

4. Provide for your family (I Tim. 5: 8)

This idea covers more than rent and food. As dads it's our responsibility to make sure our family's needs are addressed across the board - including spiritual and emotional needs. No ducking out of this one.

5. Good dads discipline their children (Proverbs 13: 24)

The one who loves their children, scripture says, is careful to discipline them. This is also about proactive leadership in our homes.

6. Dads spend time with their children, and it's not empty time (Deut. 6: 6-9).

The scriptures are clear that dads must engage their children in the kind of deep, heart-to-heart conversations that impart more than facts, but teach wisdom. Schedule some regular "conversational walks" with your children, one on one. Family time that counts.

7. Compassion is a dad characteristic

As a father has compassion on his children," Psalm 103:13 points out, "so the LORD has compassion."

8. Put your money where your mouth is

Well, not in those exact words. But James 1:22 instructs us to not only be "hearers" of God's word, but "doers" also.

9. Dads never give up on their kids

The story of The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:20-24) is the story of a father who never gives up hope and is ready to receive his child back with open arms. We can discipline, we can hold accountable, and we must never give up.

10. Dads pray for their children (1 Chronicles 29:19)

King David prayed for his son, Solomon. Children who know without any doubt that their dads pray for them every day own a deep sense of love and security.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can I be a positive role model in a negative place?

2. How can you give your kids or mentees healthy esteem?
3. How to support and encourage others in here and outside both?
4. How to mentor ...what does that mean and how do you do that? Does something about it seem interesting?

Talk #5 How do I create a healthy family from in here?

Witness about how your life is better (no matter how messy) because of your family....

God is in the business of restoration and miracles. He wants for you to have great relationships with folks that have been messed up. Why? So he can get the glory for something no person could ever do...and so you can have peace.

Are you man enough to act like Jesus?

Lots of topics that can be discussed:

1. How do I even start fixing a mess?
2. How to I communicate with folks in my life that I am in conflict with?
3. 1 Peter 3:8-11 says ⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. ¹¹ They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.

Talk about this verse and how it helps undo conflict...seek peace and pursue it is huge.

Talk about no matter what the relationship is WAY more important than any issue.

Teach/tell/convince them by example that no matter what is going on and how bad it feels that the relationship should always have so much importance that the issue is just something to figure out.

4. If you have someone on the outside who is helping you, taking care of your kids, etc. what do you need to do to help them?
5. How to get your female loved ones on the same page as you, so you can have a better, healthier family, better and healthier reentry back to the outside, etc. Discuss Kairos Outside providing them with the same forgiveness and support from like people that they received during the Kairos weekend. Plant the seed if they get to working on the relationship now, what can happen down the road, and even when they get out. This is a piece of reentry that no one does- helping the families come back together and heal and move forward even if one is in prison and others aren't. You can't ignore it till you get out. Then it is too late.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who do you need to have a better relationship with?
2. What females on the outside are doing 'time with you' and need support and fellowship and healing because of what you have done?
3. Who do you need to ask to attend Kairos Outside? (Talk about what they can do to make sure that their loved one or loved ones will attend Kairos Outside.)

Talk #6 What now? (Perhaps given by retreat leader)

It seems like there isn't much you can give your family from inside here.... Not so! You have the opportunity and the ability to give your family the love and support they need from you, while you are in here. No matter what you think, they need you. They don't need you to withdraw from their lives...especially if you have kids. So, your job, if you choose to accept it, is to figure out how to bring healing to them. You have been given a huge gift of forgiveness on the Saturday night of Kairos. Do something with it!

If you don't talk to family, start.

If you don't parent your kids, start talking or writing to them.

If you are mad at your wife, mom, sister, brother, dad... forgive them and tell them.

If you are going to go home someday to a house with people in it, start today to fix the relationship. You will need the support and love when you get released. You have to start now.

Come up with an action plan. Take small steps. Tell your Kairos family what you want to do and ask them to pray for you.

Introduce whoever is going to speak about Kairos Outside (preferably an inmate who has been impacted by someone in their family going and what it did for them). Don't tell what happens (flowers, dinner, etc.) Tell how it changes lives, how it impacts the family so they can have family healing...which impacts their re-entry in a major way. Pass out applications and have them filled out and take them out to be mailed or give to the Kairos Outside community near you to process.

Part of your action plan should be to send the females in your life to Kairos outside, so they can understand the love and forgiveness and the community you have found. They need it to...they are doing time just like you are... only they are out there.

Talk One Questions:

1. What do you think it means to be created in the image and likeness of God?
2. Do you believe that God loves you?
3. How have experiences in your life made you feel distant and alienated from God and that there is no way He loves you?
4. How did your feelings of shame affect your relationship with God? What do you want to do about it?

Talk Two Questions:

1. How have experiences in your past life made you feel and how have they defined who you are today?
2. Do you want that to have a different ending than beginning?
3. If you are a parent, do you parent like your mom and dad? Is that good or bad?
4. Who do you need to be different to and show love and maybe do the hard work of fixing a relationship?

Talk Three Questions:

1. How did your feelings of shame affect your relationship with God and others in your family?
 2. How do you wish things were different between you and family members?
 3. Do you act justly? Are you loyal?
 4. Are you humble in your dealings with others, especially your family members? How can you display humility to those you love?
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Talk Four Questions:

1. How can I be a positive role model in a negative place?
2. How can you give your kids or mentees healthy esteem?
3. How to support and encourage others in here and outside both?
4. How to mentor ...what does that mean and how do you do that? Does something about it seem interesting?

Talk Five Questions:

1. Who do you need to have a better relationship with?
2. What females on the outside are doing 'time with you' and need support and fellowship and healing because of what you have done?
3. Who do you need to ask to attend Kairos Outside? (Talk about what they can do to make sure that their loved one or loved ones will attend Kairos Outside.)