



Jesus First Series

VIDEO #3

**Dealing with Distractions (Part 2):
Family Conflicts...Maybe They're A Good Thing???**

*Transcript from video with
Kevin Swanson, Generations*

Daniel: Well, now that we're officially into the holiday season, you know that the next segment on the distraction of conflict is totally apropos, because it happens. Picture Thanksgiving morning. You wake up, you're hoping for the most beautiful and joyful time of family celebration that you've ever had. The only problem is, you kind of wake up grumpy, your kids kind of wake up naughty, your wife's totally overwhelmed, the roast, the turkey gets burnt in the oven, the ham slips off the plate onto the floor, the dog starts eating the food, then the in-laws show up, and what you were hoping was gonna be a wonderful family time turns into a family feud. You get the picture? These sorts of things happen, and they can tend to distract us from Jesus first.

Kevin: And we're not just making this stuff up.

Daniel: No, no, no, no, no.

Kevin: This stuff happens, friends. This is our Thanksgiving. This is Christmas, right?

Daniel: And the beautiful thing in all of this is while we think that these are the things that are taking us away from Jesus being first, what we find, what we're gonna talk about in this segment, is that they're actually the opportunity for Jesus to show up in even fuller clarity and greater presence in our homes.

Kevin: Yes. And so, conflict is inevitable, right? Conflict always happens. God in his providence ordains that there will be conflict during the holiday season... All year round, but it does seem to happen around the holiday season because we're all in the same house together.

Daniel: Yeah.

Kevin: Because wherever there are people gathered, there will be conflict. And so we need to be ready for it. I think we need to ask ourselves what are the root issues relating to conflict, and the number one root issue is you. [chuckle] It's you. Again, we're coming back to the me-centricness. When self is at the center, then there's going to be prolonged conflict and there won't be a conflict resolution. In order to resolve conflict, Danny, what you need is humility. You need to be able acknowledge your sin, and you need to be able forgive others. You need to be able to overlook others' faults and sins, and there needs to be some long suffering and some patience, and then some forgiveness along the way. Jesus has forgiven us, we should be forgiving others as well. But when we are the center, when we are the ones who are the big god of our world, somebody offends us, we're gonna be very disappointed, and they're never gonna be able to make it up to us, and so we're gonna begin to take on this victimhood sort of impression.

Kevin: And whenever it's a you, others, Jesus scenario, whenever you are first, others come second, and Jesus comes third, you're gonna be miserable. Nothing is gonna work out to your own expectations and you're gonna see that life will be miserable at every point, especially if you are in the presence of others. So wherever it's a YOJ, wherever it's YOJ-y, wherever you're first, others second, Jesus third, you're gonna find yourselves to be in a very YOJ-y, miserable state of affairs, but that joy starts with Jesus, then it's others, then it's you, JOY. So where Jesus is first, others second, you're third, you're gonna find that there's gonna be a great amount, there will be maximum joy in your home and in your life this holiday season.

Daniel: What are some of the other root problems that come in and generate these conflicts?

Kevin: Well, I think expectations is a big one.

Daniel: Yeah.

Kevin: People come in with all these expectations, they expect everything to be wonderful, they expect heaven on earth, and I'm here to remind you, friends, this ain't heaven. Now, when we set out to create heaven, that is if our goal during our Christmas holiday season is to create heaven on earth, we're gonna be

disappointed. Here's another problem, when you set out with an expectation that we're gonna bring the family together, it's all gonna be beautiful, and every...

Daniel: It's gonna be conflict free.

Kevin: That's right. Conflict free... Nobody's gonna sin against anybody else, that doesn't happen.

Daniel: Doesn't happen.

Kevin: No, no. The problem is we're all sinners, so the first time somebody sins against somebody else, there's this shock that sets in. There shouldn't be because hey, we're sinners, and we need Jesus. So again, the idea that there won't be any sin, there won't be any need for Jesus, there won't be any need for forgiveness from Jesus and forgiveness offered to others, man, you're living in the wrong world. Jesus came to save us from our sins, so if Jesus is the reason for the season, right?

Daniel: Yeah.

Kevin: We need to come back and ask ourselves how is he a reason for the season? And as the angel told Joseph, "You shall call his name Jesus, for he is the reason for the season." No, no, no. "You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." And so you wake up on a Christmas morning, somebody sins against somebody else...

Daniel: And you're like...

Kevin: And you realize, "This is perfect," that's why Jesus came. Perfect. He came to save us from this kind of stuff.

Daniel: And instead of responding with, "How could you possibly do that?" which takes us further away from Jesus, as parents we go, "Oh, this makes sense. There's sinners in my home, that's why Jesus came." Jesus becomes first in the moment by appropriating the power, the blessing, the freedom of the gospel to those conflicts in the middle of the holiday season.

Kevin: And we realize our need for forgiveness from Jesus, and he forgives us, and then we turn around and forgive everybody else, and now we're experiencing Christmas the way it was intended to be experienced.

Daniel: Yeah, that's beautiful. God gives us these things not to take us away from Jesus, but to bring us back to him and to help us see, with more clarity, our need for him.

Kevin: Amen. Amen. The other thing that we need to say is that we need to remember the source of our joy. If we think the source of our joy is gonna be in the chocolate cream pie or the turkey dinner or whatever it is, or even the relationships, or the presents we're opening, if our expectations are hanging on these material things to give us that joy, it's never gonna be enough.

Daniel: Yeah.

Kevin: We need to remember that Jesus is the source of our joy. God is the highest source of all fulfillment and all joy. He is the giver. He gives us the gifts, but if our joy is sought in the gift but not the giver, then we are gonna find ourselves cruelly disappointed by those expectations.

Daniel: One of those expectations, I think, often, it gets destroyed with those expectations, sometimes gets destroyed when it comes to our in-law relationships. And I was wondering if we can take a moment to just talk practically about in-law relationships during this time. It's a time where we get together. It's the time where sometimes families with different priorities, different sets of beliefs come together and try to have a

good time together. How can we, as mature Christians, appropriate Jesus being first in those family times with those in-laws, to not go down the conflict road, but to really bring a sense of peace in those extended family relationships?

Kevin: Well, I think you gotta keep it basic. Keep the faith basic. We like to say, "Keep it trunky," in that we need to remember that Jesus came to save us, and we need to celebrate this. And we need to remind our people, we need to remind our in-laws and our out-laws, and ex-laws, and all the others, that Jesus came to set us free from our sins. He came to overcome the problems of sin and death and all of the consequences of sin that we see all around us. And so it needs to be upbeat. I think it has to be a time of joy. It needs to be a time of celebration. It needs to be a time where we realize and recognize that Jesus really pulled it off. He really came and he really saved us from all of these negative things that are going on.

Kevin: And there may be conversations that go negative, but you need to turn it positive, you need to come back around and say, "Yeah, but that's one more thing that Jesus came to take care of. He is gonna save us from these sins and these consequences of sin." So I think we bring it positive, make it positive. And then of course, if there are some of our relatives who don't know Jesus yet, let's be sure that we share the gospel with them. Let's find a way to share that gospel. And of course, that comes through that just simple recognition of what Jesus has done in our own lives as well, that he has set us free. He's forgiven us of our sins, and he has saved us from our sinful condition, and we have an eternal hope in heaven as well. And we share that with others, and I think they're gonna feel it. But they may not become Christians right there and then, but we're gonna pray for that. And I think we start out that morning in prayer with our families and we'll pray for our relatives that need to find Jesus.

Daniel: Well, you talked about the fact that Jesus is the source of our joy, and let's talk a little bit about a few the resources around that, and the devotional resources that we have to make that a theme during these holiday seasons.

Kevin: Well, the most important thing we can do, Danny, in all of our recognition of the gospel, is to behold our God and to behold what he is doing and what he has accomplished in our great redemption, and so I recommend the Behold Our God series. There's actually two series now. There's the first one, and then now the second one, The Weight of Majesty, just released, and these have been reviving for entire church congregations, including our own church congregation. I think our family would tell you that this had a huge reviving influence. It adjusted our focus so that our focus was not on ourselves. We began to recognize that the more we focused on God, the more we would find the source of our joy. And so, a major exercise in the Christian family and the Christian church today is to re-focus on God himself. And this series or these two series of video tapes and the workbooks that accompany, very helpful to that end.

Daniel: Yeah, and you can even just pop the DVD in the DVD player. They all start out with about a 10, 15-minute historical introduction, someone in history who has demonstrated a particular quality or was a champion of beholding God in a certain way. And man, it's encouraging. It's interesting. I think your family would really be blessed by it.

Kevin: The bios are really exciting in those series of videos. Also, I'd recommend that you spend time together as a family on a daily basis studying God's Word and that's why we've put together these helps called Family Bible Study guides. We've got an entire Psalms series, an entire Proverbs series, and of course, we have Matthew and Genesis as well. But these study guides are very helpful in just sharing the Word of God, providing helpful illustrations, applications, and of course questions to discuss as families in these very, very important books of the Bible. I think our children need to know the Book of Proverbs and the Book of Psalms from cover to cover. They need to know all of the Psalms. They need know all of the Proverbs, because these are God's basic books for the discipleship of our families and for the discipleship of anybody. So make sure you're digging deep into the Psalms and the Proverbs, hopefully on a daily basis, hearing the Word of God. And we provide Family Bible Study guides to enable you to do just that.

Daniel: Well, in our last segment together next week, we wanna talk about gifts and gratitude. It seems like gifts should reap gratitude, but oftentimes, they don't. And we wanna talk about gifts from a perspective of what kind of gifts will bring Jesus first. We wanna give you five questions to ask. As you click "check out" or as you go through the check out lane, what are some things you can be thinking about? Five questions you could ask to help determine if a particular gift is gonna bring Jesus first in your family. And secondly, we wanna talk about gratitude. How can we cultivate that gratitude when the gifts are received, when the paper's unwrapped? How can we cultivate that kind of gratitude that we're looking for, that produces joy in our home? We'll see you next time.