



TALK IT OVER

Stronger Homes

Stronger - Week 4

Pastor Andy Wood

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If you would like to watch the weekend message, visit www.saddleback.com/watch.

Open your group in prayer and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the questions provided or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the Three Essential Questions at the end of the document.

Scriptures

Joshua 24:14–15 (NIV84), Acts 16:31–34 (NIV84), Proverbs 24:3 (NIV84), 1 Timothy 3:4–5 (NIV84), Romans 13:11 (MSG)

Questions

1. This week in our "Stronger" series, we're discussing "Stronger Homes." According to Joshua 24:14–15 (NIV84), when the Israelites were building their homes in the Promised Land, Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel and said to the people, *"Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."* In the passage above, what final commands did Joshua give to the Israelites? What bold declaration did he make with regard to his household?
2. Joshua presents a stark choice between the *"gods of Egypt"* (the habits and values of our past) and the *"gods of the Amorites"* (the pressures of our surrounding culture), urging Israel to make a daily, allegiance decision about who sits on the throne. Joshua called the Israelites to choose whom they would serve, and he declared, *"But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."* In light of Joshua's challenge, what does it mean for a household to intentionally put God at the center of its life? How can our calendars, spending, relationships, and daily priorities reveal whether we are serving God or allowing something else to take His place?

3. In the account of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30–34 (NIV84), Paul and Silas were arrested and thrown into prison. Then when the jailer realized that the Lord had miraculously freed them, he asked, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family."* This account of the Philippian jailer illustrates how one leader's bold decision to embrace faith brought salvation, transformation, and immediate joy to his entire household! The jailer's faith was immediately visible through action—washing wounds, showing hospitality, and receiving baptism. What visible indicators or habits in your home reveal that Jesus is truly on the throne? What practical steps can you take this week to put your faith into action and build a stronger home?
4. According to Proverbs 24:3 (NIV84), *"By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established."* The Hebrew word for wisdom here is *hokma*, which speaks of skill, sound judgment, and practical understanding applied to day-to-day realities. Biblical wisdom brings God's timeless truth into the practical decisions of everyday family life, including how we use technology, manage our schedules, spend money, and prioritize relationships. What are some good things that, used inappropriately, can become unhealthy priorities when they compete with our devotion to God, and how can we apply biblical wisdom to build a home that honors Him? What does *"managing a household well"* (1 Timothy 3:4-5) look like without slipping into perfectionism and legalism? How do we balance setting biblical boundaries in our home while maintaining a culture of grace and joy?
5. Joshua's references to the gods of Egypt and the gods of the Amorites are reminders to reject both the practices of our past and the values of our surrounding culture when they conflict with following God. Likewise, Joshua's bold declaration, *"But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD,"* foreshadows God's call to "take up your cross" (Luke 9:23, Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34) and follow Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (Isaiah 53:11, Acts 3:14, 1 John 2:1)—who offered Himself on the cross for your sins, broke the power of death in His resurrection, and breathed His Spirit into the church (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). In Christ, God calls believers to build a stronger home by: (1) intentional decision, (2) wholehearted devotion, and (3) bold declaration! You must remove some influences from the home, while you may need to reduce other good things in importance so they do not take God's place. How can examining your schedules, finances, media choices, and daily activities help you identify what truly occupies the central place in your home? What practical steps can you take in building a stronger home to ensure that your priorities better reflect your commitment to Jesus Christ—and affect successive future generations to come?!

Are you interested in the Bible and in helping small groups benefit from the weekend message? Well, you are in luck! Saddleback members like you create these discussion guides each week. If you are interested in joining the team, please email JasonW@saddleback.com.

Three Essential Questions

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message.

1. **What did you hear?** *What point in this message was most impactful for you?*
2. **What do you think?** *How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?*
3. **What will you do?** *How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?*

Jonathan Edwards—A Stronger Home

Jonathan Edwards was a foundational theologian and central figure in shaping the First Great Awakening in the 1730s and 1740s. His powerful preaching, including the famous sermon "*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*" (www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/sermons.sinners.html), sparked spiritual revivals that swept Britain and its thirteen North American colonies.

Albert E. Winship's 1900 study, "*Jukes-Edwards: A Study in Education and Heredity*," traced nearly 1,400 of the descendants of Jonathan Edwards and his wife, Sarah.

Winship found that Edwards' family demonstrated a high level of academic, civic, and professional achievement across multiple generations, including:

- 1 Vice President of the United States
- 3 U.S. Senators
- 3 State Governors
- 3 Mayors
- 30 Judges
- 13 College Presidents
- 65 College Professors
- 100 Lawyers
- 60 Physicians / Doctors
- 75 Military Officers
- 100+ Clergymen, Missionaries, and Preachers, and
- 80+ Public Office Holders

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Practical Ways to Build Your Home

- Go to church every weekend (unless very sick or out of town).
- Model daily time with God through Bible reading and prayer.
- Eat dinner together as many nights as possible.
- Do your best to make family times fun.
- Create a family vision, shared values, and a code of conduct.
- Discuss what you see in the world around you (movies / other families).
- Give them a biblical lens to see the world through.
- Tell your kids or grandkids what a blessing they are to you.
- Find ways to affirm what is right in them (character, not performance).
- Seek to share "Jesus Stories" with them.
- Put God first in your finances and talk about it.
- Do a family giving summit.
- Do rites of passage with your kids (10-12, 17-18).
- Put your kids in life-giving environments around godly adults.
- Keep your kids connected in serving and small groups.
- Be vigilant about technology.
- Talk about hard things in love.
- Remove harmful influences or relationships from their lives.

What stands out above as something you can implement this week in your household? What influences do you need to remove from your home? What other good things do you need to reduce to their appropriate use so they do not take God's place?

Deuteronomy 6:4–9 (NIV84) says, *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."*

How does Deuteronomy 6:4–9 above say we are to love God and impress His commandments on our households in order to build strong homes and affect future generations?

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