



## **TURNING THINGS**

**AROUND** -- *What if it was the most important thing you had ever done?*

Love for (and from) our families is arguably one of the greatest things of all. However, it is not always a bed of roses. They "get on our nerves," they disappoint and sadden us, and sometimes even make us very angry. You are very fortunate

and part of an extraordinary family if you've always been close to your family members.

It's just plain tough to be a parent every day. As they grow up and become teenagers, kids have their own ideas and opinions about everything. So, unless you are exceptionally wise and mature, you are bound to lose your patience with them. At that age, it is very important to spend time communicating with them, and listening to them when they are going through hard times and need you.

If you don't make this time a priority, especially if problems arise, before long there will be a rift between you and your children. And if you don't recognize it quickly and have the will and wisdom to change and fix things, you will soon face a long-term chasm in your family. This kind of situation can also happen between siblings.

"Time heals all wounds," they say. In fact, it is not always true. Sometimes the situation worsens, and people hardly talk to each other. Some will say things they do not mean, fiery arrows will create deep wounds, and resentment and pride will make things worse.

Raising a family is quite an art, because we are all imperfect human beings with many weaknesses. In all families, we face problems such as misplaced priorities, wrong decisions, misunderstandings, selfishness, jealousy between siblings and so on. Sometimes serious problems occur, and people are deeply or repeatedly hurt. And unless there is a great deal of love present to "cover all the wrongs," or if unkind people continue their hurtful deeds without repenting and apologizing, you may find out, 20 or 30 years down the line, that you hardly have a family at all, just a permanent state of estrangement.

Friends, these things should not be so. But sadly, these tragic situations are prevalent in some family circles and create a most discouraging state of loneliness. We all need to receive and give love, and the most natural people to love are our own children, parents and family members.

Of course, we should love the whole world, the poor, the oppressed, and the downtrodden, but that never takes the place of our family, our children, grandchildren and parents. Frankly, it is a real touch of hell to have hatred and discord, or simply indifference, coldness and total lack of communication, with those we should love and be loved by the most.

Maybe that's not your story. Maybe your family was one where the roots of bitterness and hatred never really took over your lives. But sadly, those evil roots do exist in many families and it's so hard on some of the members.

I don't care what you've accomplished, how big your house or bank account is, or how respected and popular you are. If your family is not united, if some members are almost completely estranged, if the times you get together are not filled with warmth and love, if there are no hugs and kisses, even tears, then it's hard to have real peace and joy in your heart.

Something will be eating away at your soul, a terrible feeling that you haven't handled things that well, that you haven't come through it all with the kind of accomplishments that matter the most.

But here is some good news. "As long as there's life, there's hope." Things can change. I know some families who, after decades, experienced a transformation that led to reconciliation, or at least the beginnings of a genuine desire for it.

So, if you see something like that around you, fan that little flame of love, that attempt to turn to love and forgiveness and coming together. You may eventually look back and feel that the greatest, best thing you ever did in your life was to forgive your parents or your children or siblings or whoever it was that caused such loneliness and despair in your heart.

Restoration is one of the most beautiful things in the world. And if you even start in that direction, the forces of love, which come from God, will fly to your aid, bringing life to the darkness and restoring every heart that was broken.

Love your family. Forgive your parents, your children, your siblings, and sincerely and humbly ask for their forgiveness if you hurt them. Let the restoration happen while there's still time. It could easily turn out to be the most important thing you have ever done.

*Inspired from Mark McMillion's article "Turning things around"*