

Families Are Forever!

Prologue: Books I & II

A Baker's Dozen Project

Dr. Dennis Cogswell

Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.

It is only to the individual that a soul is given.

Dr. Albert Einstein

*I wake up every morning and grab the morning paper.
Then I look at the obituary page. If my name is not on it, I get up.*

Benjamin Franklin

I am very sure that "Families Are Forever". When humans discovered cave person's writings, they came from a family grouping and have ever since records have been kept. I have been in a family for the sixty some years with no end in sight. I started out in my family of origin or nuclear family that consisted of my father Robert, mother Hazel, and younger brother Roger, all deceased. It is quite sobering to be the only living member of that family After having my own nuclear family, I am now in my extended family that numbers in the dozens, depending on how you count. I spend almost every day with my wife of four decades, Nancy (Nana), have three grown children: Kristen, Lauren and Andrew. Nancy and I have four grandchildren with another on the way. All of my offspring are happily married. There are a lot of aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, cousins and more. We have family friends all over the United States who may be counted in an extended family if one likes. I start by being a active Christian in God's family, and belong to many organizations and groups. They have changed over the year with some always being constant.

The books, “Families Are Forever” One & Two, came about for several reasons. One was the importance of families to Nancy and I. Another was that I love to learn and I had never written a book for the general public before. I have already had to learn five new software programs to accomplish this as writing a book in the twenty-first century is much more than writing.

The focus of the books on communication, feelings and relationships came after research my colleague and good friend Dr. David Cousert did on Emerging Adult Children and their Parents¹. We discovered that in general, little had been written on extended families, those families with adults other than parents over age 18. Thus I set out to do something about that.

The first book focuses on communication and feelings/emotions in extended families; the second book on relationships in extended families. Neither is exclusive and one can read either book first; reading both books is not required but will add greatly to your awareness and knowledge.

In the books you will be introduced to two main families. The first is the John and Judy Bearister family who are a compost family of all the many families we have worked with in our over four decades of counseling, nursing, and teaching graduate and undergraduates how to be counselors, especially with families. They represent you, the reader, and will speak with one voice to you about the way that they see things, how their grown kids interpret their family’s journey, and relate what other persons like you have told them about twenty-first century extended families. They will often begin a chapter with a situation that they have been told about by an extended family member or family friend. The second family is the Forever Family, also a compost family made up of Dr. D., Nana, Kelly, Vincent and Lucy ,(their fifteenth year old grandson and

¹ Cousert, D. (2011). An examination of a psych-educational program to enhance parent-emerging adult child relationships. Doctoral Dissertation Submitted to Oakland City University. Oakland City, Indiana.

girlfriend) and our guest bakers Hobs, Sir Roger and Dr. David. They are here to share their experiences, information and knowledge that they have garnered from helping families for many decades. They will mentor the Bearister family and all the other families and individuals who will appear briefly in different chapters. All but Bearly Bear, our big, old guide at the website, are either real people or based on real people, in a disguised manner. I have asked those that are here to introduce themselves to you, with John Bearister going first.

“Hi, I am John Bearister, here with my wife Judy. We have been married for thirty-two years and have three grown children ourselves. They are David, Michelle and Ian. I am a writer by trade, a columnist for my regional newspaper; I write a total of four columns a week, two each in the areas of money management and computer usage. Since I mentioned in one of my columns this book and my part in it, I have received many phone calls and emails with requests for information and help on saying ‘what do I do with this situation?’ and this is from people that I don’t even know. I expected that response from my extended family, and have gotten just that, but not from complete strangers!” John goes quiet for a moment, head moving from side to side and his palm up saying, ‘What am I supposed to answer? I don’t know the answers to their complex situations.’ He then continues.

I have just finished some team building and conflict resolution courses at work that I think could be adapted to extended families if I knew more. I am puzzled as to how to bring it all together, but then I am puzzled a lot.”

“...and I am Judy Bearister.” Stated Judy, assertively, perhaps to help buy time for John to collect his thoughts . “Our two oldest are married and our youngest, Ian, is a very eligible a bachelor as far as I am concerned. However, I don’t know if he even thinks about having a

woman in his life. David has two children and at this time Michelle doesn't have any children. John and I have been 'empty nesters' now for three years, actually eight, if you count when Ian left for college, and I think we have adjusted to it ok."

"Let me bring our family into the introduction." Dr. D. stated. "But first, I will let you know John and Judy, that we hear your concerns. For many, parenting was supposed to be over by now as some see grown kids as no longer needing parents. They may even tell you that, directly or indirectly. For the Twenty-first Century, parents are definitely needed, and not just for babysitting grandchildren. Your role has changed quite a bit with your grown kids as you don't have the control you once had, and they don't need you in that role any more. However, you are still very much needed . . . He pauses and looks John right in the eyes as only two fathers can do. . . "We will listen to your family, your friends and those who seek you out and share with you what we know and the resources of others. We will tell you when we don't know. Counselors don't have all the answers, and I think you know that. What we do have is information and ways to go about figuring things out. We do not offer specific answers like an advice column, but we have an answer that can be taken and adapted to a specific situation. We believe in building on the considerable parenting experience and skills you and other parents of adult children have to bring to a situation. We do emphasize family unity and putting parents back in key roles in these extended families. It won't be the same as the same is not needed. It will be in a supporting and mentoring role. . . I have said enough. The proof will be in the rest of the books. . . Let me now tell you some about our Forever Family."

"I am the author's professional self and I write as such. I have a Doctorate in Adult Education and a Masters in Social Work (MSW). I will share my experience as a family counselor, trainer/educator of new counselors, father of adult children and grandfather of four. Like most

people, I have long had a mythical hero² and that specifically is Will Scarlet from Robin Hood's band. As your author as a kid, I read everything about Robin Hood, Ivanhoe, the Three Musketeers, The Count of Monte Crisco, and others I could get my hands on. When I am not here writing my books, or in The Cave, I like to ride my bike, garden, play golf, and build things. I love to learn and enjoy the process more than the outcome."

"I will go next." Stated Kelly, sipping on her coffee, a habit she would like to stop. "I am Kelly, a composite woman of all the women Dr. D. has taught and trained in forty+ years of teaching. I am thirty-five, divorced, but now is a serious relationship with some child rearing responsibilities. I have an MSW degree and specialized in working with families. That is what I do now in a church sponsored family counseling agency here in the mountains of Colorado. I drink a lot of coffee each day, a habit I started back in graduate school. Some of the day I drink decaf so I think I am kicking the habit, but I don't know. I just read research that shows that drinking two cups of coffee a day can have real benefits for one's health, so there!"

Nana looks around and then speaks: "I am Nancy or Nana, depending on the moment. I am especially lovingly known as Nana to my four grandchildren and I write from that name as well. I have been married to Dr.D. for so long, I can't imagine not being married to him. I put my nursing career aside to stay at home while our children were growing up and then went back to work as a Public Health nurse in a local health department where I worked with families and young adults around their pregnancies, young babies/children and also in relationship to infectious diseases in the community. I too believe that I may have lived a previous life during the time of Thomas Jefferson as I feel a very strong kinship to his home at Monticello, Virginia."

² See Campbell, J (1988). *The Power of Myth*. New York: Doubleday. This is the classic book used by multitudes who believe that our way of life is guided by Greek mythology.

Kelly interrupts: “John and Judy, you will learn more about us throughout the book. We want to know more what you would find helpful from us as we go through the thirteen chapters, a baker’s dozen?”

“I talk with other mothers of post eighteen year old adults who are out of college or the military or have moved one from their first job.” Judy replied eagerly. “We all are surprised at how little we know about our grown adults kids...I want to call them adult children but I don’t think they like that term...We would really appreciate anything that you can tell us in general about them as they go through their lives in their late twenties and thirties. Secondly, we don’t really have many issues or conflicts but there are some...I suppose it is normal...What can you tell us about the things you might suggest that might help in our communication back and forth and in keeping our relationships solid? I know that every idea doesn’t work for everybody, but I think we all will get the general picture about main themes and approaches. We want answers, recognizing that what you say is not ‘the answer’ but ‘an answer’”.

Kelly: “Judy, this is exactly what we have heard from others so we will set a goal to do exactly what you ask. We will provide a variety of information about your adult offspring and their view of family relationships. Not only will that be provided in the books, but also in our related website at www.thefamilyforever.com . One doesn’t even have to buy a book to go there. There are presently over eighty active pages with information for all. Even your adult offspring might find much of interest there for them.”

“As to the second request, we will work to provide the readers in every chapter with several prescriptions or what we will call ‘recipes’ as to things to do. They will follow a pattern related to the Forever Family’s philosophies of being proactive, interested in strengths, looking for win-

win recipes, seeking family unity, valuing parental influence rather than control and much more.” Dr. D. finished and paused to see if he had left anything off of his list.

Nana: “We don’t talk about problems and see families as having hurdles to go over, issues or needs to be met, always working to do things the best way. All families make mistakes, want to change, and are often not sure what direction to go in. We will regularly ask you both at the beginning of each chapter what is on your mind or who have you heard from and then seek to provide you and those you are asking for, with information to move you forward over your own hurdles and meeting needs. There are FAQ’s in some of the chapters. We find that works best.”

John Bearister: “That really fits. I am a ‘let’s do it’ person so how and when do we start?”

Dr. D. “Pick a book, and start with Chapter One. Then select any other chapter in any order that you want. We have put them in the books as we see them fitting together but that is our take.

You may see it differently. Don’t forget the website www.thefamilyforever.com as it changes weekly. There are free downloads of the first chapters of each book, Table of Contents and a lot of related materials on that site. There are even some fun things to look at and links to take you to many other websites. Podcasts will be made available for free on the website and in iTunes for free, telling you about each chapter. They will start in mid 2013. See you soon. In order for any change to take place, some muscles have to be moved, so now is the time to move some muscles and go to your next destination.”

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