

GATHER AT THE TABLE

Wealth Is Built in Boardrooms. Legacy Is Built at Dinner.

Defining the Goal

Some of the most formative wealth lessons of my life didn't happen in a financial planning meeting. They happened at the dinner table.

Growing up, we ate together. Every night.

At the time, I didn't think much of it. In fact, if I'm honest, there were seasons I thought it was a little lame. Other families seemed more relaxed, more casual, maybe more "fun".

But one moment has stayed with me.

When I was young, I had a friend over for dinner. Later, his mom told mine that her son had gone home and said, "The Paynes are rich."

We weren't rich in the way he meant. There were no extravagant displays of wealth. No marble countertops. Definitely no luxury cars in the driveway.

What he felt, what he couldn't quite articulate, was something else.

He sensed intentionality.

He sensed stability.

He sensed the love.

My parents never raised us to feel entitled or affluent. But they did empower us. They poured into us. They created structure around conversation, discipline around presence, and a rhythm of connection that, at the time, felt ordinary.

It wasn't ordinary.

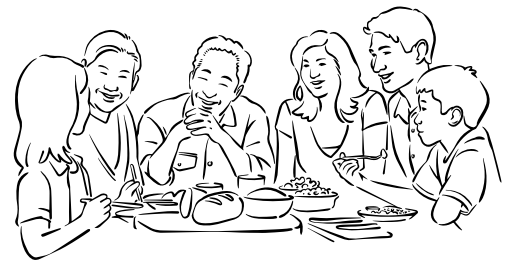
It was formative.

The data was clear. Families who consistently gather at the table tend to experience:

- Lower rates of substance abuse in adolescents
- Lower levels of depression and anxiety
- Improved academic performance
- Stronger vocabulary development in younger children
- Greater family cohesion and communication skills

I remember walking home after that class and calling my parents. I thanked them. Not for the food. Not for the rules. But for the sacrifice. Because by then I understood something I couldn't see as a kid:

Dinner wasn't about eating. It was about building relationships.



The Research Caught Up to My Childhood

Years later, I sat in a Family Relationships course at Kansas State University. The professor walked through research on shared family meals, the measurable impact they have on communication, academic performance, emotional resilience, and long-term relational strength.

Different Stages, Same Principle

Today, dinner at the table looks different for Ashley, Aurora, and me than it did in my childhood home. There are fewer chairs. Different schedules. Different energy levels. Aurora isn't debating theology or business strategy just yet.

But the habit is being built. And that's the point.

Whether it starts when the rising generation is 2 or 16 the habit can be learned. The culture of a family is not declared, it is practiced. It easy to default to convenience. To eat separately. To multitask. To scroll.

But building the rhythm now sets a trajectory. It plants a flag in the ground that says:

This family meets at the table.

A Generation Later

What fascinates me most is watching what happens now when our extended family gathers at my parents' home.

No one assigns seats. No one mandates attendance. No one forces conversation. And yet, we gravitate to the table. We sit.

We linger.

We laugh.

We connect.

It's as if decades of repetition carved pathways of connection. The table became synonymous with safety and dialogue. As someone who works with multigenerational families, I can tell you this: Continuity does not happen accidentally.

Wealth transfer statistics are well known. Many of my clients have heard me passionately discuss the phenomenon referred to as "Shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves in three generations" or "the risk taker, the money maker and the undertaker". The point is most families lose significant wealth by the third generation. Not because of poor portfolio construction, not even taxes, but because of fractured communication, misaligned values, and relational drift among the family.

Financial capital without social capital rarely survives. The dinner table quietly builds social capital.

Protecting the Environment

At our house, if someone pulled out a phone, it was immediate: "No phones at the table." At the time, it felt strict. Now, I get it. The distractions today are exponentially greater. Notifications. Streaming. Group chats. Sports. Constant noise. Which means the value of undistracted presence has increased.

The dinner table is one of the last remaining environments where sustained attention still exists, where eye contact, thoughtful disagreement, storytelling, and intergenerational dialogue can happen without interruption.

Wealth and the Table

In my work with legacy-minded families, we often talk about governance structures, family meetings, foundations, trusts, and business succession plans.

Those are important. Necessary, even.

But I've come to believe something that may sound overly simple:

If a family cannot communicate at dinner, it will struggle to communicate in the boardroom.

The table is the training ground. It's where children learn how decisions are discussed. It's where they hear stories of risk and resilience. It's where values are transmitted informally and repeatedly. It's where gratitude is practiced. You cannot outsource that.

No advisor, attorney, or investment strategy can replace a culture of consistent, intentional connection.

In fact, many of the strongest multigenerational families I've observed have something in common:

The structure of togetherness existed before the wealth did.

The wealth amplified what was already there. It didn't create it.

The Definition of Rich

When my childhood friend called us "rich", he wasn't measuring net worth. He was measuring something far more complicated: Stability, Connection, Intentionality, Presence.

Those are assets too. And like market returns, they compound quietly over decades.

My parents likely didn't realize the long-term ROI of those dinners. But looking back, I see it clearly. They were building a legacy.

Gather at the Table

There will always be reasons not to. I understand that intimately. The families I serve carry enormous responsibility, businesses to run, teams to lead, kids to raise, capital to steward, communities to influence.

But if wealth is meant to serve the family, then we must protect the environments where family identity is formed first and foremost. Don't wait to prioritize this. Implement it now.

And that may be the most strategic investment you make. Years from now, your children likely won't remember what the market did this quarter, the valuation multiple of your last liquidity event, or your crop yields.

But they will remember whether they felt heard. Whether they belonged. Whether they were invited into real conversation.

They will remember whether your family gathered at the table.

And one day, when the next generation gathers (without being told) to sit, talk, laugh, and linger...

You'll know exactly where your true wealth was built.

Here is ours:



**Joshua D Payne, CFP®, AEP®,
CLU®, WMCP®**

Financial Planner

Physical Address:

623 Topeka Ave
Lyndon, KS 66451

Mailing Address:

PO Box 636

Lyndon, KS 66451

785-828-4296 (fax)

www.paynefs.com