

The Greatest Family Value Is The Family Itself

We probably all learned in school that the scientific name for man is “homo sapiens.” We were also taught “homo sapiens” are part of the classification called mammals. In fact (so they say), while man’s species name is “homo sapiens” man is part of

the genus Homo
the family Hominidae
the order Primate
the class Mammalia
the kingdom Animalia.

In other words, the label “homo sapiens” is the evolutionist’s classification of man as a species of animal.

In recent years, the designation of man as an animal has been used to justify immoral behavior as the mere expression of natural animal instincts. Sexual activity outside of marriage is not only socially acceptable now, but it is even expected – so much so that contraceptive devices are distributed to teenagers through public school systems. The immoral life styles of famous people are celebrated as role models for the general public. Such gibberish has contributed to the destruction of the family unit. The family unit is now being redefined to include homosexual “couples” and other groupings of people besides a husband and a wife and their children.

The Bible presents an entirely different picture. According to Scripture, man is not an animal, but a separate class of creatures, elevated above the animals and with the responsibility to exercise dominion over them. The family unit comes from a divine moral precept which is absolute and unchanging. With all the talk about family values, it is important that Christians be reminded that God intends His definition of the family to be the foundation of our human family values.

I. HUMAN ETHICS DIFFER FROM ANIMAL ETHICS

A. Note the distinction God made at the time of creation.

In Genesis 1:21-25, God ordered that each animal bring forth after his kind.

*And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, **after their kind**, and every winged fowl **after his kind**: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature **after his kind**, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth **after his kind**: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth **after his kind**, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth **after his kind**: and God saw that it was good.*

This tells us that all species (kinds) of animals are defined in creation. The reproductive process for them works only within the species. A dog and a cat cannot mate and bring forth a cog or a dat. There are different breeds of dogs and cats, but dogs will always beget dogs and

cats will always beget cats.

Man, on the other hand, is never said to bring forth after his “kind.” This is because man is not an animal “kind.” He is a totally different type of creature. Man was made in the “likeness” of God (Genesis 1:26). And so when man reproduces, rather than bringing forth after his “kind,” he brings forth after his “likeness.” Consider Genesis 5:1 and 3:

*This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, **in the likeness of God** made he him;...And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and **begat a son in his own likeness**, after his image; and called his name Seth:*

The word “likeness” is very different from the word “kind.” The Bible word “kind” refers to a species or a group of living organisms belonging in the same created “kind” having descended from the same ancestral gene pool.¹ The Bible word “likeness” means similitude, like as, in the likeness of.² It is used in 2 Chronicles 4:3 where it refers to the likeness of an ox on the bottom of the laver made by Solomon for the new Temple. Imagine a father and son looking upon the new laver and the father says, “Look, son, there is an ox on the bottom of the laver.” When the son sees the image, he understands that it is not a real ox, but something that looks like a real ox. When God made man in his likeness, man was intended to be a creature that reflected the person of God. This is what tells us that man is not governed by animalistic instincts, but by a nature patterned after the nature of God. So when a man begets a child, the child is not God. So when a man begets a child, the child is not simply a reproduction of a physical being, but possesses a nature similar to his or her parent, which is supposed to be similar to the nature of God.

God further indicated the distinction between man and beasts in the manner in which man was given consciousness. All the animals are merely made and set in motion in the creative process. But only man is said to have the breath of life breathed into him by which he became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). As a soul man thinks and reasons, feels emotion, and makes rational choices; and in these capacities he functions as a moral being with a conscience. Animals are never said to be guilty or held accountable for their actions, but man is.

B. Note the distinction in nature.

In 1 Corinthians 15:39, we are told that all flesh is not the same flesh.

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

This is offered as an illustration of the difference between the physical natures of man before and after the resurrection. Just as there is a distinction between the flesh of men and the various kinds of beasts, so there will be a great difference in the physical nature of man before and after the resurrection. Reversing the illustration, we are given a clear statement here of how much different even the flesh of man is from that of the various kinds of animals.³ Just as there is a great difference between the physical natures of man before and after the resurrection, as the difference between that which is mortal and immortal, and between that which corruptible and incorruptible, so there is a great difference between the nature of man and beasts.

In Genesis 1:28 and 3:16, man is told to be fruitful and multiply, just as the animals are said to do in Genesis 1:22. But while animals bring forth after their kind, man brings forth children after his likeness in a moral context.

II. GOD CONSISTENTLY ENDORSES THE FAMILY

A. He ordained the family in the beginning.

Consider God's original intent for the family unit. He said it was to consist of one man and one woman in a one flesh relationship, bringing forth children.

Genesis 2:24,

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Genesis 3:16

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Consider also, that according to Jesus, original intent matters regarding marriage and the family unit.

Matthew 19:4-5

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

B. All family values taught in the Bible include a father, a mother, and children.

In the New Testament, contexts which give instructions for the family include all the members of a family as God originally intended. Colossians chapter three is one such context where verse 18 is addressed to the wife, verse 19 is addressed to the husband, verse 20 is addressed to children and verse 21 is addressed to fathers.

This same thing can be observed in the Old Testament as well. For example in Proverbs chapter 23, verse 22 mentions both father and mother, verse 24 mentions father and child, and verse 25 once again mentions father and mother.

C. God used the family context to bring His own Son into the world.

The biblical record of God's Son coming to earth is found in Matthew chapter one and Luke chapter two. Jesus could have come to earth in many different ways, but God chose to have Him be born in a family unit, with a human mother bringing her infant son into this world, and a human adoptive father. This endorsement of the family unit could not be stronger.

D. God uses the family relationship of father and son to describe a saved person's relationship with Him.

John 1:12 says that God gives power (authority) to those who receive Christ to become **sons** of God. Galatians 4:5-6 says that we were redeemed so that we might receive the adoption of **sons**. *And because ye are sons*, it says, there are benefits like the indwelling Holy

Spirit. The point to note here is that without the family unit intact as God originally intended it, this concept of being a son, or child of God the Father, will be totally lost in the thinking of human beings.

E. God laments any distortion of this order.

God made the family unit the way He wanted it, and He does not want it changed in any way. In Leviticus chapter 18, with great specificity God defines who qualifies to establish a family and who does not. This is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 5:1ff where a violation of Leviticus 18:8 is identified as being tolerated in the church. The church at Corinth is rebuked for this and commanded to deny fellowship to this illegitimate “couple.” In Romans 1:26-27, God declares that some relationships contradict the natural order! Contrary to those who describe immoral behavior as only doing that which comes naturally, God says immoral activity is against nature and a departure from the natural use.

Consider how you would feel if someone entered your home while you were away, and rearranged things in your house. You would feel violated. Someone has invaded your home and violated your privilege to have things the way you want them. This is how God feels when human beings mess with the family unit. God made the family. He arranged it the way He wanted it. It is a violation of divine privilege for man to alter the family unit in any way whatsoever.

III. GOD EXTENDS HIS BLESSING THROUGH THE FAMILY

The family unit has come from God. And if it is God's creation, then He obviously has a purpose for the family.

A. The family itself is a reward.

God declares that having children is as much a blessing as it is to find fruit on healthy plants.

Psalm 128:3

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

B. The first commandment with promise is in the context of the family.

Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the fifth commandment, *Honour thy father and thy mother*, is accompanied by a promise. In Exodus 20:12, the promise is *that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*. In Ephesians 6:2-3, the promise is *that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth*. This means that the promise which accompanies this family commandment is effective for everyone who obeys it.

C. The family is the context of our spiritual heritage.

God explained to the generation of Israel which was about to enter the promised land that He had chosen them because he loved their fathers (Deuteronomy 4:31-37). This principle of spiritual heritage being handed down through the family structure is taught in the substance of the ten commandments. In Exodus 20:5-6, God said that His mercy is extended through

thousands of generations. This is evidenced by an unbreakable chain of a believing remnant throughout the course of human history. The unfortunate corresponding truth is that spiritual consequences can also be handed down through the family structure. For in the same passage, God says that the iniquity of a man can be evidenced through the third and fourth generation.

IV. IT IS THROUGH THE FAMILY THAT WE PROMOTE GOD AND HIS VALUES

A. This is true in all aspects of family life.

It is the duty of parents to know God. Deuteronomy 6:5-6 say,
And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.

Then in verse 7 it says that parents are to communicate these things to their children.

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

From this verse we must see that it is not enough to have a brief devotional time at home with the family. For a long time now, Christian parents have been told that they must have family devotions, or a family worship time. While there is nothing wrong with this advice, it has been misapplied in too many homes over the last 30 or 40 years. Somehow, the message has come across that a family will be okay spiritually as long as they have a little box called family devotions. Dutifully, families have spent 10, 15, 20 or 30 minutes together several times each week (on rare occasions on a daily basis) reading the Bible and praying together. Then satisfied that they have fulfilled their "obligation," the rest of the family's week outside of church is spent in purely secular contexts, without the mention of God or biblical principle. Deuteronomy chapter six tells us that we as parents must be communicating the reality of God and His principles in every context of our lives. The devotional life of the family is to be in the house when you are sitting together, outside of the house when you are traveling on the road, in the evening when you are preparing for bed, and in the morning when you are arising from a night's sleep. We must pass on to our children everything we understand about God, and how to apply His principles in every aspect of daily living. Otherwise, important concepts about God and His nature, and His expectations of us will be lost.

This is precisely what happened early on in the nation of Israel. In Judges 2:10 it says,
And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

If parents were loving God with all their heart and teaching their children as they were supposed to, how could a generation arise that knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done?

In the New Testament, the duty is the same. Ephesians 6:4 says,
And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Do you see what are identified as opposites here? Either you bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (in the spirit of Deuteronomy 6) or you provoke them to wrath. The word "nurture" refers to the whole education of a person including every aspect of life's experience, just as in Deuteronomy 6:7. The word "admonition" refers to the process of nurturing. It is to be done in an assertive, confrontational manner which teaches truth, reproves and corrects error, and instructs in righteousness.

Consider your own family situation. What percentage of your family life is secular and what percentage is God focused? The answer to this simple question may be very telling.

B. This is practiced as an example of commitment and loyalty.

Joshua challenged the people of Israel to make some choices. He said in Joshua 24:14-15,

*Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, **choose you this day** whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

The choices we make will have a great bearing on the choices our children make. If they are to recognize God in their lives, they must see the evidence of Him in ours. Why did the next generation after this not know the LORD and not have any knowledge of his works? It was because there was a breakdown in communication from one generation to the next and somewhere in the process, they stopped hearing the Word of God (Judges 2:20), and lost the concept of faith (Romans 10:17).

Conclusion

What is at stake? What do we lose as human beings if the family unit does not exist in the form which God originally gave it? There are two primary things at stake. One is a basic understanding of the likeness of God, and the other is an understanding of the nature of the relationship a believer has with God.

There was a girl in the touring choir of the college I attended many years ago, who had spent her entire life in the city. She had never been to a farm and had never seen a cow in real life. On one of our first trips with the choir, we passed a field where cows were grazing. She screamed, "A cow!" She was so excited to see a cow in real life for the first time. But wait! How did she know it was a cow if she had never

seen one before? She was able to recognize the cow because she had seen likenesses of cows in picture books. The same is true with our children regarding their ability to recognize God. They will know God in their own lives, if they have seen a likeness of Him in the lives of their parents. God made man in His own likeness, but due to the fall of man, that likeness can be camouflaged by the sin that corrupts us. We beget children in our own likeness, but if we do not love God and seek Him, the likeness our children will reflect will be seriously flawed. Parents must be in a right standing with God and live their lives as a reflection of Him so that their children will be able to know the God who made them and to whom they are accountable.

Equally important is the relationship between parent and child. If the relationship between parents and children is flawed, children will have a difficult time understanding the concept of being born-again and becoming a spiritual child of God the Father. A young woman of my acquaintance some years ago did not want to be born again because she did not want to enter into a relationship with God the Father. Her earthly father had painted for her an ugly picture of fatherhood by being abusive and mean and hurtful. She assumed that all fathers were the same, including God the Father. I do not know if she ever came to Christ.

Any distortion of the family unit as God ordered it in the beginning will create a crisis in the human mind and heart. God ordered the family as a teaching tool for some very important divine concepts. This is why the family itself is the primary family value and must be preserved as God intended it.

¹Online Bible, Strong's Concordance definition for "kind," Hebrew word #04327.

²Online Bible, Strong's Concordance definition for "likeness," Hebrew word #01823.

³This also clearly refutes the supposition of evolutionists that sea, air, and land animals descended from each other. The flesh of each of these is clearly different and distinct. 📖

A Riddle

Long before Adam, one there lived
And liveth still it is believed;
Whose name reversed herein you'll see.
Look close and find out who this may be.

Defining The Family

Context is so important when defining words and concepts. For example, consider the word "bank." What do you think the word "bank" means as it is used in the following sentence?

"The man put the money in the bank."

You probably are thinking of a building which houses a financial institution whose business is to keep your money safe, pay you interest, or loan it to someone else. However, if we expand the above sentence and broaden the context, the sense of the word "bank" changes.

"The man put the money in the bank by the river, as the police chased him after the robbery."

Now you see the man burying the money in the dirt of a river bank in an attempt to hide it. This is a much different image than the first smaller sentence suggested. The thing that made the difference was the context.

In another illustration, imagine a fly inside an airplane. Let's say, for the sake of illustration, that a fly normally flies at a speed of 50 miles per hour. And let's say that the airplane in which the fly is flying, is flying at a speed of 500 miles per hour. Since the fly is flying inside the airplane and in the same direction as the airplane, how fast is the fly really flying? For some, the answer would depend upon the context. To the passengers inside the airplane, the fly would appear to be flying at a speed of 50 miles per hour. However, if someone on the ground watching the airplane go by could also see the fly flying inside the airplane, the fly would be seen as flying faster than the airplane at a speed of 550 miles per hour. In fact, the fly inside the airplane is flying at a speed of 550 miles per hour. Those inside the airplane would not perceive this because of their close context. Only those on the ground would be able to see this because they can see the larger context.

Context makes a big difference in understanding.

So, what is the family? Context will also influence how we define the family. If we look only at our human circumstances, it would be similar to being inside the airplane and being limited in our context. The result will be a definition of the family that may appear to be accurate, but does not actually fit with reality. This is what is happening in our world today. The family is being redefined by those who are inside the airplane (in this case – the world system) as any group of people (perhaps even including animals) which live together and love each other. But if we can step back and view the family from the bigger picture, i.e. the larger context seen only from a divine vantage point, what do we find?

The Divine Commission to the Home

1. The General Commission to Humanity

When God created man, He gave mankind a commission. *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth* (Genesis 1:26). “Let them have dominion!” God planted man on the earth with the intention that man would exercise dominion in all the earth just as God exercised dominion in all the heavens. In doing so, man would reflect the image of God and bring glory to Him.

God said more about this in Psalm 8. There in verse 1, He makes reference to His own glory: *O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.* Then in verses 4 and 5, He refers to the glory of man: *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.* Then in verses 6-8, in explaining what this crown of glory and honor involved, He said, *Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.* In other words, the crown of glory consisted of having dominion.

However, according to Hebrews 2:6-10, man does not now have that crown of glory. After quoting the verses noted above from Psalm 8, He says in Hebrews 2:8, *But now we see not yet all things put under him.* This is because in man’s fall into sin, he lost that crown of glory when he abdicated to Satan, submitting to the will of the Devil rather than the will of God.

The wonderful part of the story as it is related in Hebrews 2, is that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was also made a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor so that He could taste death for every man. In doing so, it was His objective to bring many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10). In other words, in salvation man would be restored to the original commission given to him in creation.

Therefore, man’s commission is to exercise dominion on the earth and thus reflect the glory of God. Everything that man does, must then fit into the context of that commission. This includes the functions of men and women as individuals and their functions together in social unions.

2. The Commission to the Man and to the Woman

God intended a distinction between man and woman from the very beginning. Jesus Himself verified this when He said, *Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning*

made them male and female (Matthew 19:4). He also ordained an order of headship. God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman (1 Corinthians 11:3).

The woman is placed last in this order, but still is given an important commission. It was noted soon after man was created that something was seriously lacking in Adam's life. So God made woman to be a help meet for him. The word used for "help" in Genesis 2:18 which describes woman's commission, is also used in other places of Scripture. For example, it is used in Psalm 121:1-2 where we are told that our help comes from the Lord. So this "help" function to which woman was assigned is exactly the same "help" function for which God Himself is known. This makes the "help" commission for woman a significant matter. In fact, woman was made for this role precisely because man needed help. It was not good for him to be alone because he could not function effectively alone. He needed help. So woman was made and granted this significant commission. It is easy to think of the importance of man's role of head over the wife and family as a reflection of God's headship over all persons, angelic or human. But we must also understand that helping is just as much a divine function as is being head. Therefore, woman's commission is no less significant than man's.

In fact, please note that in the general commission to mankind, men and women are given a partnership in exercising dominion. In Genesis 1:27-28 the Bible says, *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

The "them" to whom God said "Be fruitful...and have dominion," included the male and female, both of whom God created in His own image, commissioning them together.

Thus it takes both head and help to give a complete picture of who God is. God is head over all, but He also is One who helps all over whom He is head. A man alone cannot reflect the fullness of God's glory. A man and woman together are required to reflect the fullness of God's glory.

3. The Commission for Marriage

With the above context, the divine commission for marriage can be understood more precisely. This commission is for one man and one woman brought together in one union. Genesis 2:24 expresses it thus: *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* The word "cleave" means cling to, stick to, or be joined together. A man and a woman are glued together in marriage so that they are not two, but one entity. It is in this union that they will be best equipped to fulfill the divine commission for mankind. In fact, 1 Corinthians 11:11 affirms that one without the other is less than one whole: *Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.* The two shall be one flesh. Just as you cannot have a coin with one side, you cannot have a marriage union without the two components that complete each other in the commission to reflect the glory of God – a man and a woman – a head and a help.

In this relationship there is ordained a companionship that reflects this partnership. As God said in Genesis 2:18 that *it is not good that the man should be alone*, [because (shall we say) he desperately needs help], so He said in Malachi 2:14 that the wife is the companion of the husband. This word companion is a very interesting term to be applied to the relationship between husband and wife. The root word of "companion" was used in Exodus 26:3-6 in

reference to the manner in which the curtains of the Tabernacle were put together. When it says in Exodus that the curtains were to be “coupled” together, the word “coupled” is the root word to “companion” in the Malachi passage. Furthermore, it says in Exodus 26:6 that the purpose of coupling the curtains together was so that together they would make “one Tabernacle.” This is the sense in which a man and a woman become companions in marriage. They are coupled together so that they lose their separate identities and together become one identity in their marriage. This is why Genesis 2:24 says they become one flesh. This is a composite one as the LORD is one LORD in Deuteronomy 6:4 consisting of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So a marriage is one flesh, consisting of two persons, husband and wife.

Marriage is the vehicle through which God intended that man and woman as a single unit together would in their respective roles partner in exercising dominion over the earth. Man would rule and woman would help. Together they were to reproduce and multiply – not only more human beings – but more men and women who could partner together, thereby extending the ability of humanity to exercise dominion and fully reflect the glory of the sovereign God.

Divine Principles for the Home

In light of this, God has outlined some principles for the home which are intended to facilitate fulfillment of this commission.

1. Marriage is honorable.

Hebrews 13:4a says, *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled....* The word honor in the Bible refers to something of high value. Marriage has been assigned a value by God. It is honorable. That means it has the highest possible value in the eyes of God.

The honor of marriage is based on God’s original idea. Jesus was asked about marriage and its durability in Matthew 19. In verse 8, Jesus said that broken marriages resulted from the hardness of man’s heart; and then He affirmed that God’s original intent for marriage was the foundational principle that should govern man’s understanding of what is right. He said, *but from the beginning it was not so.*

In other words, marriage is supposed to be on the gold standard. For example, when paper money was first issued, gold was the standard that determined the value of the paper dollars. That means each dollar of paper money represented an actual deposit of gold in the bank equal to the value noted on the paper dollar bill. As our economy declined, our government reduced the value of each paper dollar to an equivalency of silver, and thus issued the silver certificates. Now, there is no promise of gold or silver deposits for the paper money we use to buy things. Take a paper dollar to a bank and you can exchange it for other paper dollars, or coins that are made of inferior materials. But if you want gold, you must pay about 500 of those paper dollars to get just one ounce. That makes our paper money worth very little.

Our society has in the same way taken marriage off of the gold standard. Likewise, God’s original intent for marriage was the gold standard – on man as head and one woman as helper, together reflecting the fulness of God’s glory. But marriage has been devalued by no fault divorce, by the affirming of alternative relationships, and by the redefining of the family to include something other than the marriage of one man and one woman in a one flesh union. Just as we wish our money would get back to the gold standard, we ought to once again honor the divine gold standard for marriage and the home.

2. Marriage is binding for life.

In spite of what is being popularly taught in our modern era, the Bible is emphatic about God's intention for marriage to be permanent as long as both husband and wife are alive on earth. In Romans 7:1-4, God makes a point about the believer's relationship with Christ. He illustrates this with some particulars about the marriage relationship and in doing so affirms the principle of permanency for marriage.

Before salvation, man is bound to the law (verse 1). However, through the work of Christ, we are *become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another* (verse 4). He says in these statements that to be bound to Christ, we must first die to the law. We cannot be bound to both at the same time and death is required to sever our relationship with the law in order that we may be "married" to Christ. Christ's death secured this needed death for us because when we are placed into Christ at the time of our salvation, we are also placed into His death (Romans 6:3-4).

To illustrate this spiritual truth, He uses some particulars regarding marriage. He says, *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband* (verse 2). Furthermore, if the married woman does not wait until her husband is dead before she marries another, she shall be called an adulteress (verse 3). He stresses this to give emphasis to the truth about being dead to the law in order to be married to Christ. But in the process, He relates an important truth about the binding nature of marriage until the death of one spouse. Just as the binding nature of marriage can only be broken by the death of one spouse so that the surviving spouse can be married to another, so we must be dead to the law in order to be married to Christ. We could say the reverse is also true. Just as we must be dead to the law in order to be married to Christ, so the binding nature of marriage can only be broken by the death of one spouse. When we do not maintain this order and we follow worldly ways instead, we dishonor the sanctity of marriage and we destroy the spiritual lesson about a believer's relationship with Christ.

This is not complicated, especially for those who have come to faith in Christ and to understanding of truth through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, *from the beginning it was not so* (Matthew 19:8). If God set up permanency to marriage in the beginning, then we ought to graciously accept His original intent. In fact, adhering to the original intent is crucial to the successful fulfillment of the divine commission.

3. Marriage Requires Commitment.

In the context where the marriage relationship is called a companionship (note above), the violation of that companionship is called treason. Malachi 2:14 says, *Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.* To act treacherously is to deceive and betray. The wife is coupled with the husband so that they are one flesh, just as the curtains were coupled together to make one Tabernacle. The husband and wife are bound by an unconditional covenant, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part. It is the duty of each to remain committed to each other and the vows they have pledged together. Otherwise, what message is sent to those who observe, particularly the young folks of the next generation, regarding the divine commission of reflecting the image and glory of God? Since it takes both head and help to reflect that glory in completeness, to breach the relationship is to send an unholy message

regarding the glory of God.

4. Parents are to be Honored.

God's statutory law indicates some high priorities for man. The fifth commandment says, *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee* (Exodus 20:12). Ephesians 6:2 in the New Testament repeats this commandment and specifies that this is the first commandment with promise. The promise is *that it may be well with thee* (Ephesians 6:3). How will it be well with children if they honor their parents? Boys will learn from their fathers how to be a man and how to treat a woman properly. Girls will learn from their mothers how to be a woman and how to treat a man properly. Both will learn from their parents the important elements of a marriage relationship – head and help – without which they will be helpless to fulfill the divine commission.

As children honor their parents, they will learn that honor goes upward. Unfortunately, in our present society, honor is going downward. Children are being honored by their parents instead of the other way around. Lifestyles, priorities, schedules, values, and many other things are being determined in today's families by the interests and demands of the children. But honor in the Bible is to go up, not down. Adults are to honor God and glorify Him. He is not the child of human adults, He is their head. If a child is to learn how to honor God, he must learn through the honoring of his parents that honor goes upward, so that extending that honor to God will be a natural process. If children are conditioned to think they are the center of the universe by parents who honor downward, children will presume upon God and expect that God too will simply give them whatever they want. This is why honoring parents is such a crucial principle to be instilled in children as early as possible. It will be a crucial element in shaping a child's concept of God.

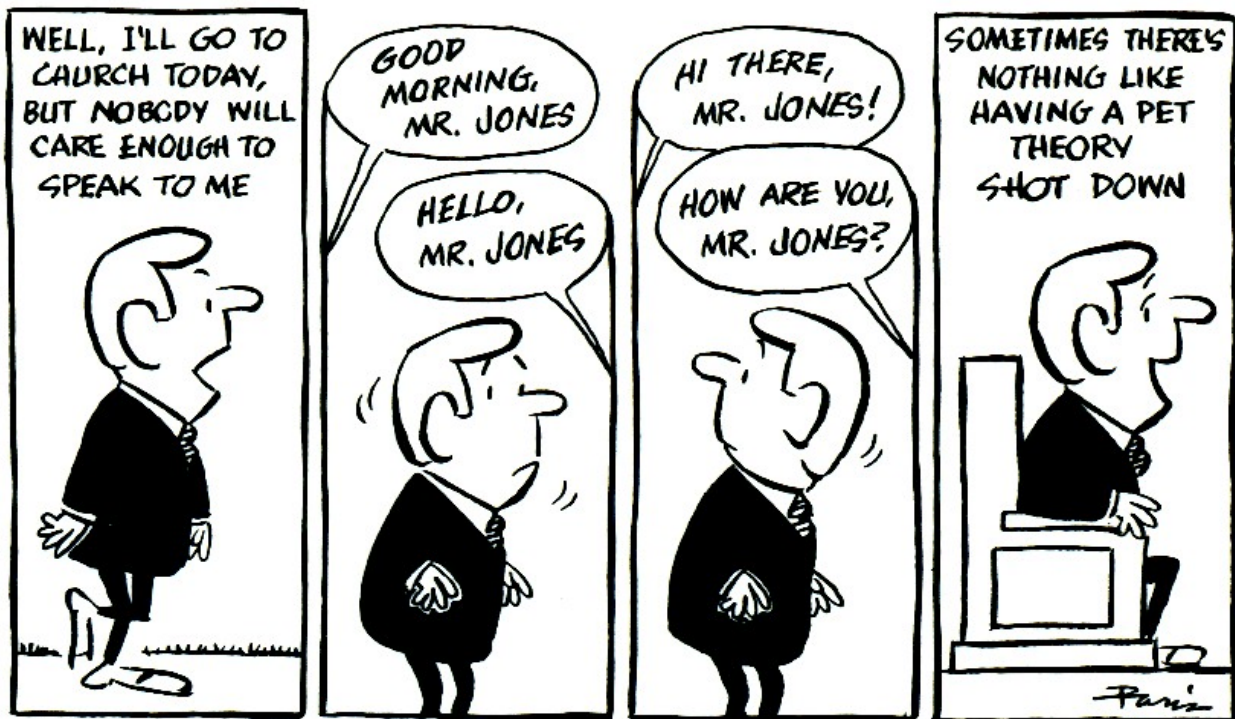
5. Children are to be Brought up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord

Ephesians 6:4 says, *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* It is imperative that children learn how their lives fit into the context of the divine commission. Too much secularism prevails in our Christian homes today. Faith and devotion to God are relegated to extra curricular activity. If the family feels it does not have enough time together, they tend to stay home from church services to make up that time rather than deny themselves secular recreation. From this kind of lifestyle, children only see things from inside the airplane (note illustration above), rather than seeing the big picture from the ground. Parents must help their children get out of the airplane and see that the fly is flying at a speed of 550 miles per hour, that there is a divine perspective to things and their duty is to have their feet firmly planted on the ground where they can fulfill the divine commission.

6. Consideration is to be Given as to One's Influence Upon future Generations.

God said He would visit the iniquity of one generation to the third or fourth generation to follow, but He would visit mercy unto thousands of generations (Exodus 20:5-6). Which heritage would you rather leave behind? – a heritage of iniquity that will adversely affect your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and possibly even your great-great-grandchildren? – or a heritage of mercy that could have an endless effect upon those who follow you? Proverbs 13:22 says, *A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children....* What do

you want that inheritance to be for your grandchildren? Psalm 103:17 says, *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children.* Righteousness is a good thing to pass on to future generations. And if you do so, Proverbs 17:6 says, *Children's children are the crown of old men....* It will be greatly rewarding if we can just teach our children



We must step outside the airplane. We must look up and see the big picture to understand the divine context which should define our lives, our marriages, our homes. Only in doing so will we come to appreciate the true nature and purpose of marriage and the family, of the church and the Christian life, and of the divine commission given to mankind. So, let's get back to the gold standard. Firmly plant your feet on the ground and keep looking up! 📖

The Curriculum

That Builds The Home and Family

I was present at the birth of all four of my children. What an awesome experience to see your own child gasp his first breath, whimper his first cry, feel his first touch. Then – what an awesome responsibility dawns upon you when this untaught, totally dependent creature comes into your hands...to mold, to teach, to lead, to guide, to train.

Astronauts train for months and for years. Space is simulated for them in many ways to get them accustomed to the sensations they will experience once they are in space for real. But none of that training can compare to the reality of being catapulted hundreds of miles above the earth. And once you are in space, you cannot stop the space ship, get out and walk home. You are there and you have to do your job. Likewise, prospective parents may read books, take classes, and watch others rear their children, but once their own baby is in their hands, they are thrust into a reality from which they cannot escape – they can only succeed or fail! So, what is a parent to do?

Know Your Objective

1. A newborn child is the essence of innocence.

Children are born as sinners.

Psalm 51:5 - *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

But newborn children are incapable of making value judgments. Both good and evil exist in their lives but they cannot discern the difference. Isaiah 7:16 says, *For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good....* And Deuteronomy 1:39 says, *Moreover your little ones...which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil....* Both of these statements in Scripture support this contention. Even though children inherit the sin nature in conception, as it is stated in Psalm 51:5, there is still a period of time in their youngest days on earth in which they have no more awareness of the difference between good and evil than they have of the difference between their right and their left hand (Jonah 4:11).

It is thus implied that there is supposed to come a point in a child's growth and development in which he becomes aware of the difference between good and evil and is then accountable for the choices he makes. A person who is old enough to have achieved this measure of development but who does not, may then be described as childish and immature.

2. The objective, therefore, of every life is to reach some point of maturity when the elements of childhood are laid aside.

1 Corinthians 13:11 states this very clearly:

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

3. It is the responsibility of the parents to lead a child from his beginning point of

innocense to that desired point of maturity.

Proverbs 22:6 says a parent is supposed to *train up a child in the way he should go*. This idea of “training up” is similar to the concept of training a horse. In training a horse you must break its wildness and then condition it to responsibility. When young children cannot discern the difference between good and evil, they will indulge indiscriminately in both good and evil and they will act out evil things without the restraint of a consciousness of guilt. Parents must program a child’s conscience by consistent discipline and they must direct a child’s thoughts so as to develop an understanding of what is morally acceptable and what is not. Telling a child “no” with an accompanying consequence is a necessary exercise from the earliest age so that a child may learn as quickly as possible where the lines of distinction between good and evil exist.

4. The rod of correction is the ultimate tool against foolishness.

Proverbs 22:15 says that *foolishness is bound in the heart of a child....* Romans 1:21-22 tells us that when a person’s foolish heart is darkened, he will profess himself to be wise and sink even deeper into foolishness. So, a child must be rescued from foolishness, as the second half of Proverbs 22:15 says, by the rod of correction which will drive foolishness far from his heart.

Proverbs 13:24 teaches that a parent who truly loves his child will chasten him with the rod, for only the parent that hates his son spares the rod. Proverbs 23:13 says that a parent should not withhold correction from the child, because proper spanking will not destroy the child’s life. Rather, according to Proverbs 32:14 a proper spanking may be the very thing that will direct a child’s heart to the Gospel and deliver his soul from hell.

Proverbs 10:13 tells us that the rod is for them that are void of understanding, which implies that other means have been applied first in an attempt to build understanding in the life. But these other means have failed to be convincing. So the rod must follow reproof to reinforce the lesson being taught. Proverbs 29:15 says that the combination of the rod and reproof will provide wisdom to a child. Either the rod or reproof without the other will be an insufficient means to give a proper perspective of wisdom to a child. Neglect in giving proper instruction and discipline together will result in a child acting in such a shameful manner as to bring great embarrassment even to the woman who bare him into this world.

5. This negative education should be accompanied by the positive instruction of being brought up in the *nurture and admonition of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4).

This “bringing up” means to feed properly and promote health. “Yes” should be as much associated with good in a child’s life as “no” is associated with evil. The combination of yes/good and no/evil is the imperative of the proper development of a child’s conscience and his ultimately reaching the objective of moral maturity.

[Please note that parents should not be discouraged when their children constantly fail to do good and consistently do evil, even after their consciences have been programmed to understand the difference. As children become more aware of the difference between good and evil and yet still do evil, either by choice, or by mere weakness of the flesh, this becomes the vehicle by which parents can teach the concept of the Gospel and help their children understand why Jesus Christ died on the cross. Without a properly programmed conscience, children will do the same wrong things, but without the sensation of guilt. Children who do not feel guilty about the evil they do will be very difficult to win to Christ.]

The mother - father combination is invaluable to the process of teaching children the difference between good and evil. The book of Proverbs refers to the father as the one who begat the child and the mother as the one who bare the child (Proverbs 23:22-25). Both the instruction of the father and the law of the mother are necessary in fully programming a child's conscience (Proverbs 1:8; 4:1-3; 6:20).

6. Every parent should set this goal for their input into their children's lives, that when they are of age, they will be able to speak for themselves regarding their own encounter with Jesus Christ.

In John chapter 9, Jesus healed the man that was born blind. The Pharisees in their disbelief questioned the man's parents as to the truthfulness of this healing. The man's parent's replied in verses 20 and 21, *We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.*

It is the imperative of every life, that they be brought to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. When the conscience of a child convinces him of sin, he must then understand that the only relief from guilt comes through a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the application of His saving grace to his life. Each person must be assured of this in his own heart and be able to bare his own testimony regarding his spiritual status before God. Children will never experience any relief from guilt through their parents' sanctification. It must be personal.

Know Your Curriculum

1. Parents must select the curriculum they will teach their children.

If parents want to teach their children so that they will be able to recognize the difference between good and evil, understand the choices they make, and be able to speak for themselves regarding their own encounter with Jesus Christ, they must carefully select the curriculum they will use in the teaching process. Parents' influence on their children can have far reaching consequences:

Deuteronomy 5:9 - ...for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,
Likewise, parents' influence on their children can produce far reaching blessings:

Proverbs 20:7 - The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

It is imperative that children be taught the truth. Only the truth will lead a child to understand his own sinful condition. Only the truth will lead a child to understand the grace of God by which a person can be delivered from evil through faith in Jesus Christ. Only the truth can ultimately lead a child to the necessary resources in Christ which will give a person the capacity to choose the good and refuse the evil.

2. The curriculum must not just be taught, but believed and lived by the parents.

Deuteronomy 6:6 says to parents, *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.* My high school physics teacher was only one chapter ahead of us students in his preparation for class. It was difficult to learn a subject from a person who had so little understanding of it himself. If parents do not know God, they will be hard pressed to teach

their children the standards of God which are necessary to distinguish between good and evil.

Consider the consequences of parents not knowing God. According to Hosea 4:1, where there is no knowledge of God there is also no truth. According to Isaiah 59:12-15, when *truth is fallen in the street* a serious moral tragedy exists in society. According to 2 Timothy 3:4 and 7, when men are not able *to come to the knowledge of the truth*, they will love the pleasures of this world more than they will love God. Consequently, for children who have parents who do not know God, it is much more difficult for them to come to an understanding of the difference between good and evil, and to come to an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which alone can deliver them from the evil they have not been able to refuse. Only the truth will set these children free (John 8:32); and it will be much easier for children to find the truth if their parents live the truth before them every day.

3. Children must be exposed to the truth constantly and consistently.

Too many families categorize their “religion” in neat little packages called “devotions” or “family worship” and live the rest of their time in a mere secular existence. Do not misunderstand. Devotions are a wonderful thing. The problem is not in having devotions; the problem is in not incorporating devotional thoughts into every aspect of life. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 portrays the concept of a teaching lifestyle, in which parents help their children see truth in everything.

Verse 6 says, *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.*

“These words” refer specifically to the ten commandments outlined in Deuteronomy 5:7-21. But the principle applies to the whole body of truth which consists of the entire Bible.

Verse 7 says, *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.... It also says, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

Verse 9 says, *And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.*

The point is as follows:

When you rise in the morning
teach your children to acknowledge that God is the LORD and that he will lead them through the day.

When you walk by the way
(or while you drive the car, or when you deal with store clerks, etc.) teach your children to love their neighbor and to respond righteously to the frustrations of life.

When you are sitting in your house
teach your children to understand life by reviewing the day and offering scriptural applications to the events that have occurred.

When you lie down at night
teach your children to be thankful and prayerful, and thoughtful, meditating upon the Word of God.

Based on 2 Timothy 3:14-17, a child must be able to continue in the things which he has learned and has been assured of, knowing of whom he has learned them. He must from his earliest childhood consciousness be taught the Holy Scriptures which alone are able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. He must be exposed to the inspired Word of God which will perpetually be profitable in his life for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, bringing him to a perfection or completion of maturity in which he will be thoroughly furnished or prepared unto all good works. This worked for Timothy because the same thing first existed in the lives of his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5) and they successfully passed it on to him, not by a brief religious exercise confined to 15 or 30 minutes a day, but by lives that reflected and taught these truths every moment of every day in every context of life.

Be Specific In Teaching Values And Ethics

1. Teaching the distinct roles of men and women is an important starting point for establishing a biblical foundation for godly homes.

In the beginning, God created man and made them both male and female. If the family is to continue to exist as God intended it to, then boys must learn what it means to fulfill the divine concept of manhood and girls must learn what it means to fulfill the divine concept of womanhood. This requires two properly functioning parents for the learning process to be successful. From fathers, boys learn how to properly act as a man, how to properly treat a wife, and how to properly be a father to children. Girls learn from their fathers what a man really is supposed to be like, how they ought to be treated by a man, and what to look for in a man who will be the father of her children. From mothers, girls learn how to properly act as a woman, how to properly treat a husband, and how to properly be a mother to children. Boys learn from their mothers what a woman really is supposed to be like, how they ought to be treated by a woman, and what to look for in a woman who will be the mother of their children. Thus, a properly functioning home provide children with a model which they can use to shape their own homes when they become adults. When a child's home life is dysfunctional according to the divine model established in creation, it becomes much more difficult for him to establish his own home according to biblical standards.

2. Young girls are to be taught the values of womanhood.

Titus 2:4-5 suggests the lessons mature women should be teaching adolescent girls as they grow up in the truth.

To be sober:

teach them to think seriously about life

To love their husbands:

teach them to focus on their husband's needs

To love their children:

and on their children's needs

To be discreet:

teach them to guard their reputation

To be chaste:

teach them to be morally pure

To be keepers at home:

teach them to focus on their duties at home

To be good:

teach them to do things of value
To be obedient to their own husbands:
teach them to respect their husband first of all

2. Young boys are to be taught the values of manhood.

Titus 2:6-7 suggests the lessons mature men should be teaching adolescent boys as they grow up in the truth.

To be soberminded:
teach them to think seriously about life
To be a pattern of good works:
teach them to be confident and responsible
In doctrine shewing uncorruptness:
teach them to be wise and have conviction
about what they believe
Gravity:
teach them to have good manners
Sincerity:
teach them to be trustworthy
Sound speech that cannot be condemned:
teach them to be respectable in what they say

Conclusion

Jesus said in Matthew 7:11 that parents know how to give good gifts to their children. Indeed, we human parents are usually pretty good at giving our children things, fun, and extra curricular opportunities in abundance. But the period of a person's life in which he is a youth is so short compared to the amount of time he is likely to spend as an adult. In light of this, parents should make a special effort to give their children much greater gifts such as wisdom, the knowledge of God, a sense of accountability to God, an understanding of the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and a sense of loyalty to the truth.

Parents should view themselves to be the primary disciplers of their own children. Jesus told his disciples to *go ye therefore and teach all nations...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...*(Matthew 28:19-20). We understand this to be a commission to missionary endeavors worldwide. But those who are concerned for the spiritual welfare of people around the world ought to be concerned enough to begin with their own children.

God said his desire is to give his people *an heart to know me, that I am the LORD...*(Jeremiah 24:7). It is the duty of us who are parents to cooperate with this divine objective by cultivating our children's hearts to be receptive to God's will for their lives. No greater joy can come to a parent's heart than to find of their children that they are walking in truth (2 John 4; 3 John 4). So teach them to sanctify the Lord God in their hearts (1 Peter 3:15), and to buy the truth, and sell it not (Proverbs 23:23). 📖

The Imperative Of

The Extended Family

When the government decided to do away with one room school houses back in the early to mid twentieth century, they created a destructive phenomenon in American culture. They began isolating young people into very narrow peer groups away from interaction with those of varying ages and levels of maturity. The result was a conditioning of young people to exclude other generations from their sphere of influence. Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, the youth culture exploded in the United States and a new philosophy of life began to take over. It included such slogans as "Don't trust anyone over 30," "Do whatever feels good," and "Be anti-establishment." The "hippy" movement, dominated by lasciviousness, changed American culture forever.

Unfortunately, instead of standing firm as an alternative to this madness, the church followed the pattern of the world and adopted the youth culture mentality as an emphasis for its approach to ministry and activity. Mass youth ministry programs kept young people separated from mature Christian adults, and as a result, a whole generation of young people never saw adults worship. When those young people became biological adults, they then dropped out of church in large numbers. Churches then changed their worship styles to re-attract the young people to the church services. But then the young people were separated again as churches provided a "traditional service" to accommodate the older folks and a "contemporary service" for the young and the hip. The GENERATION GAP became a reality, not because one actually exists in a sane society or church fellowship, but because it was created by the actions of those who believed in the "virtues" of separating people by age groups.

There is a case to be made from the Bible, however, that this trend should be reversed. The Biblical contention is this: that we ought to provide for intergenerational interaction both in the family and in the church.

There is an Extended Family Beyond the "Four Walls" of the Immediate Household.

God pronounces His blessing on the extended family. First, He declares that each generation should establish its own unique household.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. Genesis 2:24

But then He affirms that it is a blessing to be able to see your grandchildren.

Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel. Psalm 128:6

God also indicates the value of children is to succeeding generations.

Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers. Proverbs 17:6

Unfortunately, many families in our modern world are divided by geography. With the ease of relocation in our travel wealthy culture, some grandchildren seldom, if ever, are able to visit with their grandparents.

In other cases, families may be divided along the lines of faith. In Luke 12:51-53, Jesus testified that one result of his coming would be the division of families because some would believe and some would not. This can put a strain on family relationships to the extent that some grandchildren may be separated from their grandparents to guard them from the influence of either faith or faithlessness.

We need properly functioning families, though, to establish a model for the church because according to the Bible the family structure is supposed to be a picture of how the church is to function internally. Jesus said that His “mother” and “brethren” were those who heard the Word of God and do it (Luke 8:21). This concept was carried over into the church as indicated from relationships like that between Paul and Timothy. In 1 Timothy 1:2, Paul referred to Timothy as “my own son.” There is no indication that Paul and Timothy had any biological relationship. It is clear, that the relationship to which Paul referred in 1 Timothy 1:2 was spiritual in nature, because he qualified it by saying “my own son in the faith.” The biological family relationship was the model Paul used to describe his relationship with Timothy on a spiritual level. Further evidence of this being carried over into the church comes from 1 Timothy 5:1-2 where we are encouraged in the context of the church fellowship to treat elder men as fathers, elder women as mothers, younger men as brothers, and younger women as sisters. The biological family must be functioning properly in society as a model for the church so that the relationships of believers can be developed along those same lines albeit within a spiritual family unit.

One of the benefits of this is then that the spiritual family unit of the local church can fill the gap when the biological family structure is not available for one reason or another. If an individual comes from a dysfunctional or non-existent family structure at home, he may find within the church those persons who can fill the roles of father, mother, brother, and sister. If a young family, an older couple, a college student, a job transferee, or anyone else is separated geographically from their extended family members, the church can provide substitute grandparents, grandchildren, uncles, or cousins to meet the familial needs of each one.

Whether biological or spiritual extended family members, it is imperative that we see the value of the influence of different generations upon each other. Let us consider why.

The Perpetuation of Faith

Imagine what life would be like if there were no schools and no education. No adults would serve as teachers, no one would pass on to younger people what they have learned. Each generation would be left to start from scratch and learn for itself whatever it could. Life would be very primitive wouldn't it?

Imagine then what it would be like if no believer ever told another person about their faith. The thought is absurd isn't it? If then, it is imperative for believers to pass on the testimony of their faith to others, what is the best context in which to do that? God says that intergenerational interaction is certainly one excellent context to do so.

*One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts....
They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy
righteousness. Psalm 145:4 and 7*

In fact, God says that mature adults should provide things which will arouse their grandchildren's curiosity about what He has done for them. For example, in Joshua 4:5-7, God instructed the Israelites to take 12 stones from the middle of the dry Jordan river bed as they crossed it into the promised land. They were then to set up these stones as a memorial to God's miraculous provision. This memorial would then be a vehicle by which fathers of future generations could testify to their children of the greatness of God when the children see it and are curious about its meaning.

It is a mistake to expect each generation to learn about faith completely on its own. The testimony of one generation to the next is a definite concept taught in the Bible and with good reason. Take for example the spiritual heritage of young Timothy. The faith exhibited in his life first dwelt in his grandmother Lois, and in his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). It would certainly have been possible for Timothy to find faith without the influence of his mother and grandmother. But it was easier with that influence. When you travel from one place to another, it is possible to find your way without road signs; but it is a lot easier if road signs point your way. Older believers must see their faith testimonies as road signs for young people which point them in the way of the Saviour and in the way of the will of God for their lives.

Discipleship is A Family Matter

This leads us to another matter: that of discipleship. God is emphatic in His Word about the necessity of training those who will be able to carry on the work of the ministry after us. In 2 Timothy 2:2 He said through Paul, *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* Then in Titus 2:2-6, He gave more specific instruction, putting discipleship training in the context of intergenerational interaction and related it to some aspects of the home and family. Mature men and women are to set examples of godly character (verse 2): *That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience;* and (verse 3) *The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.* Mature women are then to teach younger women (verse 4-5) *That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.* And mature men should exhort the young men (verse 6) *to be sober minded.*

What better place to facilitate such teaching than in the context of the home and family. Fathers and mothers should be those mature examples to their children and instruct them in the way they should go.

But the church must also provide for such intergenerational interaction so that the younger folks, whether children, teens, or young adults might have the necessary resources in the testimonies of older adults as to how to develop their lives to the glory of Christ. If the church keeps each age group and each specialized segment of the body of Christ separated into their own unique program, such interaction will never take place, and something vitally important will be missing in the church. The church and the home should work together in providing younger people with the opportunity to interact with those from whom they may learn many life lessons and spiritual applications.

The Value of Older Adults

Thus we must recognize the value of older adults both in the home and in the church. Children need to have an active relationship with their parents. They also need to have an active relationship with their grandparents. In fact, a few aunts and uncles and some cousins of various ages would also be helpful for the full development of their minds and hearts. If biological family members are not available, the church should be seen as a valuable resource for substitute extended family members of all age levels, especially of those who are older than your children who can provide examples and patterns for them to follow.

Those whom we call "senior citizens" are especially revered in Scripture as worthy of our

respect and attention. For one thing, they have the potential of directing the hearts of younger folks to the reverential fear of God. Leviticus 19:32 says, *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.* This verse tells us that as we show respect toward an older person, we will be facing the direction of fearing the Lord, probably because that is what we will see in the man to whom we are showing respect. The hoary head and the old man represent to younger generations the fullness of human experience. As such, those who are younger can benefit tremendously by learning from his experience and testimony of faith.

There is, in fact, no substitute for experience. Young people may be very intelligent and knowledgeable about many things, but wisdom comes from experience and according to the Bible that belongs to those of a mature age. Job 12:12 says, *With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.* Consider the example of Rehoboam, who refused to listen to his father's older counselors who were much more experienced than his own young advisors (1 Kings 12:6-9). Rehoboam chose the whims of his young men over the advice of the older and wiser men and this failure proved to be disastrous for his kingdom.

Of course, there is a qualification for the value of the example and wisdom of older adults. Elihu, in the book of Job, addressed Job's three friends and expressed his dismay at their poor advice to Job. He said, *I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment* (Job 32:6-9). There is nothing more disappointing than older men failing in wisdom. But, of course, wisdom does not come just from age, but, as Elihu indicated, it comes most importantly from the inspiration of the Almighty. Thus Proverbs 16:31 says, *The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.*

The Work of Older Adults

Personal growth never ends and those who grow older have the potential to grow ever wiser. II Corinthians 4:16 says that *though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* The human body may grow frail, but the person within may continue to grow ever stronger in the Lord. Thus productivity is a very real possibility for older adults, including those whose bodies have become limited in their mobility. For Psalm 92:14 says, *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.*

Older adults can show younger folks that God is trustworthy. In the verse just mentioned above, the full text says, *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.* The next verse, verse 15, tells us why they shall be fat and flourishing. It is *to shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.* David bore this kind of testimony into his old age and was not bashful about talking of it. In Psalm 37:23-26 he said, *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.* And again in Psalm 71:17-18 he said, *O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.*

Older adults can also testify to the truthfulness of what we believe. In his old age, Peter wrote to believers who were well informed about the truth. At least some of what he wrote to

them was not new, but were a reminder of things they already knew. He wrote them anyway in order to reinforce them and to verify their truthfulness. In 2 Peter 1:12-15 he said, *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.*

Conclusion

The foundation of a growing church will not be lots of young people who overwhelm the older folks. In a church dominated by young people and young Christian adults, the examples of older, more mature Christians will be in too short a supply to have a sufficient impact upon those who need it. Rather, the foundation of a growing church will be a sufficient supply of older, mature adults whose testimony and example can mark the path for young people to follow.

When I was a young father, my day off was Friday. This was back in the days when gas was much cheaper, and for fun, we as a family would hop in our car and drive around exploring. It seemed that almost every time we did this, I would drive into some kind of situation that caused us to drive in a circle. Of course, I would never stop and ask directions. I had to find the way out myself. It became a family joke that on Fridays we drove around in circles. I give this little illustration to say that young people should not live their lives by driving around in circles without stopping to ask for directions. They should seek direction for their lives from older adults who have already passed by that way.

At the same time, there is an important word of advice for older folks. That is, don't be content just to have been on the road a long time. Make sure that you have made progress in the process of traveling through time. Develop in your life an example and testimony of godliness and faithfulness so that you may say to younger folks who look to you, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

For these things to happen, there must be an interaction between the generations. In the home and in the church, we must understand the value of the extended family, and provide opportunities for the whole family to mingle together. 📖
