

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

The Influence of the Family on the Local Church

Robert Gessner
Part 1 of 2

An Introduction

“For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:5) When providing Timothy with the qualifications of an elder, Paul clearly indicates the relationship between the family and the local assembly. If one is not practicing godly responsibilities at home, he will not be able to assume them in the assembly.

There is ample evidence in Scripture that Satan is at war with the local assembly and seeks to destroy it. (Romans 16:20; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14,15) It is obvious in today’s world that Satan also understands the importance of the family unit. The corruption of the family unit can destroy a nation, but more importantly, it also can destroy a local church. Throughout most of the world the family is in serious trouble and so are many assemblies.

Many have been deceived into thinking that the local church is an organization designed to serve the needs of the family. In many cases, churches have become entertainment centers for the family. If the church does not provide what we consider adequate provisions for our family, both physically and socially, we look for another place to go. If our children get into trouble and are inadequately trained, we partially blame the church for not reaching them.

It is the purpose of this series of illustrations to show that the thinking of the world has caused us to reverse the order of the family and the church. The family that grows together in the Lord contributes to the local assembly’s growth. Our training in the family enables us to strengthen the people of God in the assembly. Our lack of training in the family makes us “non-givers” in the assembly, and turns us into selfish receivers.

The Neglectful Husband in the Assembly

Sarah’s husband clearly took the position of the head of his household at the beginning of their journey for God. “...Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him... Abram took Sarai his wife... Then the Lord appeared to Abram... He built an altar to the Lord.” (Gen. 12:4-7) It did not take

long, however, until Abram sadly neglected his responsibility of looking after his beloved wife. When he got down into Egypt and his soul got full of Egypt, he allowed the selfish preservation of his own life to rule his conduct. “Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.” (Gen. 12:12) He was willing to compromise his wife in order to preserve his own life. “Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.” (Gen. 12:13)

Often selfishness on the part of the husband controls him to the point that he neglects his duties as head of the household. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.... So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.” (Eph. 5:25,28) The second time “love” is mentioned in the Bible it is in reference to a husband’s love for his wife. (Gen. 24:67) Love is an act of unselfish giving just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Being head of the household requires unselfish devotion and a commitment of one’s time and energy to others. The neglect of this responsibility demonstrates the selfishness of our present day on the part of many husbands. Television, the love of sports, the pursuit of hobbies, and many other activities, take priority over household responsibilities. We often assume that providing for the family in a material way excuses us from providing for their spiritual growth.

Now what happens to this neglectful, selfish husband in the life of the assembly? If he is not assuming leadership in the home, he will not do so in the assembly. One of the qualifications of a spiritual leader is “one who rules his own house well.” (1 Tim. 3:4) Why is it in any given assembly that most of the responsibility is carried by a handful of men? Where are the leaders of the assembly? The husband who lets his wife handle the spiritual problems at home obviously is not going to take on spiritual leadership in the assembly.

The assumption of responsibility brings problems, whether in the home or in the assembly. When we assume leadership in a given area we often make mistakes. If you do not do anything, you cannot make a mistake. Making mistakes brings criticism. It is easier not to do anything and criticize those who do something. Our life of leisure in America has turned us into spiritually lazy men. It has created an atmo

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sphere of apathy that grieves the heart of the Holy Spirit, as well as the hearts of godly sisters in the assembly.

Husbands have much to contribute to the growth of the assembly. They must, however, practice spiritual leadership daily in the home. Television viewing must give place to the study of God's Word. The love of hobbies and sports must be replaced by a desire to serve the Lord both in the home and in the assembly. Many gifts lie dormant: "...stir up the gift of God which is in you." (2 Tim. 1:6) Many jobs remain undone because no one has time to do them, yet there seems to be plenty of time for selfish pursuits. Husbands, ask God what you can do to strengthen first your home and then your assembly. A prayer such as this will open up to you a whole new way of living full of meaning and satisfaction.

The Misplaced Wife in the Assembly

Adam's wife illustrates the dangerous outcome of assuming leadership over her husband. Eve is the only woman that came into the world as a wife. She did not become a wife many years after her arrival but began life as a wife. We are saddened as we read Genesis 3 to find her, as the first wife, failing to fill the role that God had given to her. Instead of being a helper to her husband, she assumes leadership, answers the serpent in place of her husband, and even invites her husband to eat. (Gen. 3:6) "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." (1 Tim. 2:11-14)

Adam, by permitting his wife to take over at this point, was not exonerated. Upon writing about the first sin in Romans 5, Paul clearly places the guilt on Adam: "...through one man sin entered the world..." (Rom. 5:12) "For the husband is the head of the wife" (Eph. 5:23) and, therefore, he is held responsible for her actions. This is a sobering thought for every wife to consider.

In God's beautiful and perfect order He had given to the wife the supportive role of service to her husband. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." (Col. 3:18) If we sincerely believe the teachings of our Lord, she has received the more rewarding role for "whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant." (Matt. 20:26)

For many reasons, in many Christian homes today, the wife has assumed the leadership, particularly in spiritual decisions. In doing so, she has become a misplaced wife because she should be helping her husband to assume the role rather than doing it herself.

Now the question arises, what happens to the misplaced wife when she enters the assembly? Obviously, she finds her

role there a very difficult one because she is not practicing this role in the home. "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church." (1 Cor. 14:34,35) Herein lies a great difficulty. How can she ask her husband at home if she has assumed the spiritual leadership there? How can she encourage her husband to assume public responsibilities in the church if he is not encouraged to assume them at home?

In the "churches" throughout America, it is sad to see in so many cases, more and more women taking over the role of leadership, while more and more men sit in silence or no longer even attend. We must pray that this reversal of God's order does not take place in the local assembly. The spiritual wife, who truly desires God's best for her life, can greatly contribute to the maintenance of God's order in the assembly. She can encourage her husband in so many ways to take on responsibility in the assembly. It is interesting to observe that most active men in an assembly have a wife who is both supportive and encouraging.

There is another way that the wife becomes a tremendous asset to an assembly. She admonishes "the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their husbands...". (Titus 2:4,5) It is very difficult for the elders of an assembly to remind a young lady to wear a headcovering. It is so helpful when a godly woman takes on this admonishment in the privacy of the home. Generally, insubordination among the younger sisters of the assembly has been passed on by the older sisters. By example we help the assembly to grow.

The Permissive Father in the Assembly

The first time "love" is mentioned in the Bible it is a father's love for his son. (Gen. 22:2) Yet in the New Testament husbands are commanded to love their wives (Eph. 5:25), but fathers are not commanded to love their sons. They are commanded to "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4) It seems there is a suggestion here that husbands might easily tend to forget their pledge of love to their wives and become overly demanding and unsympathetic toward them. Yet, at the same time, as fathers they might, in the guise of love toward their sons, neglect to train and admonish them in the Lord.

Absalom's father demonstrates the father who becomes too permissive with his son and fails to train him properly. As we trace the story of Absalom from 2 Samuel 13 to 18, we discover his father, David, wept over Absalom's death but failed to administer proper justice toward his actions while he was alive. Love must go far deeper than the desire to give our children everything they want or to allow them

to do whatever they choose. David permitted his love for his son to replace his regard for justice and righteousness in the land. Joab rightly stated, “you have disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life, the lives of your (other) sons and daughters ... you have declared today that you regard neither princes nor servants; for today I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died today, then it would have pleased you well.” (2 Sam. 19:5,6)

A father’s love must lead him to train his child in the Lord so that the child will become an effective servant of God. Sometimes this training involves saying “no” when it would be easier to say “yes”. It involves a consistent enforcement of godly standards within the home. It involves denial that sometimes causes temporary “hurt” within the home.

Now if a father does not uphold the standards of God’s truth within his home, neither will he uphold them in the assembly. A qualified elder is exhorted to “have faithful children not accused of dissipation (indulgence in pleasure) or insubordination.” (Titus 1:6) He does not permit his children to do anything they want to do. Sometimes this is the easiest road, the path of least resistance, but it is not the best. Our children should not be puppets whose every move is controlled, but they must have reins upon them or they will soon stray into the paths of great danger. The father who cannot say “no” at home, cannot say “no” in the assembly.

There is an air of permissiveness that has permeated our whole society and, sadly, our assemblies also. It is an earthly philosophy based on the premise that if it makes them happy, let them do it. We have developed the attitude that we must keep our young people contented at any cost or we will lose them. We seem to be unaware that only the Word of God can keep them. “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to your word.” (Ps. 119:9) All of our concessions and exceptions will eventually bring about their destruction.

Fathers, if you have loving and caring elders in your assembly, support them with all your might. Do not blame the assembly for the sins that have permeated modern families today. Demonstrate to your family that you support the Word of God and those who faithfully seek to teach it. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.” (Heb. 13:17)

At present it may seem good to be popular among the young as those who permit an “understanding” departure from the principles of God’s Word, but, in the end, we sow the seed of disastrous discontent.

The Scheming Mother in the Assembly
To be continued in May issue.

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of the man in willing submission. The observing angels had witnessed the rejection of God’s order by the woman in the garden that led to the fall of mankind. They were now to know that the woman in new creation is different. She recognizes man’s God-given authority to lead and willingly submits to it. This she demonstrates by covering her head when gathered for spiritual purposes, as angels are not omniscient and know not her heart. *

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Husbands, love your wives Eph. 5:25

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Who did Jesus come to save?

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinner**s.... 1 Timothy 1:15

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet **sinner**s, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was **lost**. Luke 19:10

When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but **sinner**s to repentance. Mark 2:17

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the **ungodly**. Romans 5:6

What did Jesus do to save them?

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins** according to the scriptures; 1 Corinthians 15:3

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet **sinner**s, **Christ died for us**. Romans 5:8

For when we were yet without strength, in due time **Christ died** for the **ungodly**. Romans 5:6

Who his own self **bare our sins in his own body** on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 1 Peter 2:24

For Christ also hath **once suffered for sins**, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.... 1 Peter 3:18

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to **give his life a ransom** for many. Matthew 20:28

Who **gave himself a ransom** for all, to be testified in due time. 1 Timothy 2:6

But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to **put away sin by the sacrifice of himself**. Hebrews 9:26

How can they be saved?

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.... Acts 3:19

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth in him** should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

For by grace are ye **saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: *Not of works*, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, Acts 16:31

But these are written, that ye might **believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**; and that believing ye might have life through his name. John 20:31

Because Of The Angels

Excerpt from "Headship"

Steve Hulshizer

For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. 1 Cor. 11:10

For what cause should the woman, and not the man, have a sign of authority on her head? For the reason that the woman is the glory of man, as stated in verse 7, and shown in verses 8-9. The covering is a sign to the myriads of angelic hosts that observe the order of the saints (Eph. 3:10). This may well include both the fallen and elect angels. But what does the covering on the woman's head indicate to the angels? Herein lies the wonderful truth behind the symbolic practice of the truth of Headship. As verse 10 indicates, the woman in new creation is to function "under"

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