

# 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 2 of 2

### The Scheming Mother in the Assembly

Although there are two direct exhortations to fathers in the N.T. epistles (Col. 3:21, Eph. 6:4), there are none to mothers. This does not deny the importance of the mother in the family, but rather, it emphasizes the father's responsibility as the head of the family and the importance of the mother supporting him in this position. There are examples in Scripture of mothers who became involved in intrigue and deceit within the family. Jacob's mother is probably the best example of such a scheming mother.

From the very beginning things did not seem right in this family. The father and mother were divided in their affection toward their children. "Isaac loved Esau ... but Rebekah loved Jacob." (Gen. 25:28) Playing favorites is a dangerous game within the family. Rebekah seemed determined to win out in the competition. Hence follows one of the saddest narratives of family intrigue in the Bible. The mother, convinced that she had God on her side (Gen. 25:23), apparently felt the end justified the means. She involved her son in a scheme against his elder brother that almost cost Jacob his life and required him to go into exile. To achieve her goal, she had to deceive her blind husband. The result was that she never again saw her favorite son.

By not waiting for God to bring about His blessed will, Rebekah brought into Jacob's life many years of grief. The blame fell directly on Jacob, not on his mother who perpetrated the scheme. His father said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing." His brother said, "He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" (Gen. 27:35,36)

How many mothers, thinking they know what is best for their children, push their will into the molding of their children! Pushing children and young people into roles which God has not intended for them always leads to difficulty, especially within the spiritual family of the assembly. We have an illustration of this in Matthew 20:20-28. Ten of the disciples were moved with indignation against James and John. Strife was to take place among the disciples. Although

James and John were the objects, they did not begin the problem. The mother of Zebedee's sons came to the Lord with her sons, asking that these two sons of hers be given the best seats in the kingdom. It is natural for a mother to want her children to succeed above all other children, but it is not spiritual. Much of the contention that occurs within assemblies today can be traced to this spirit of competition that is fostered at home. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself." (Phil. 2:3)

Mothers probably have better opportunity than fathers to promote by word and example this spirit of humility. The quiet, prayerful spirit of a humble mother has an effect upon a child that is never forgotten. The proud, restless spirit of an ambitious mother can cause disturbances that also have a lasting effect. The world teaches us to push forward our wishes until we achieve our goals. The Word of God teaches us to commit ourselves to God in order that His will may be achieved. "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility ... Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." (1 Pet. 5:5,6)

### The Rebellious Son in the Assembly

Twice the Bible uses the phrase "Disobedient to parents." (Rom. 1:30, 2 Tim. 3:2) In the first instance it is speaking of a society that has abandoned God in its thinking. By and large we are living in such a society today. In 2 Timothy, it is speaking of the last days before the second advent of Christ. We are living in those days now. Therefore, it should not be surprising to see disobedience to parents as a major characteristic of our society. The Bible warned us so that we might take precautions in our own families. The tragedy is that this characteristic has not only permeated the Christian family, but is often permitted and defended as a necessary development in a modern family. Modern psychology has convinced many that permissiveness is an essential ingredient for the proper growth and development of our children.

The younger son in the parable of Luke 15, who became the lost son, is an example of many of our children today. The first utterance that comes out of his mouth is "Father, give me." In the midst of plenty, he only saw life as a fulfillment of his wants and will. His demand for his portion revealed a

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heart of selfishness, impatience, and insubordination. When he came to himself and realized the folly of his ways, he said, "Father, make me." (Lk. 15:19) He now realized that life is not a selfish game of taking all for himself, but that it is a disciplinary process of making and shaping an inward character. It is too bad that in our affluent society we have failed as parents to recognize the value of discipline. Without discipline there is no training or learning. "My son do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects..." (Prov. 3:11,12) "...a child left to himself brings shame to his mother ... Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul." (Prov. 29:15,17)

"We have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect." (Heb. 12:9) Those of us who had parents who disciplined us have much to be thankful for. Your child will some day thank you for correcting him. If you fail in this task (and it is often an unpleasant task), eventually you will lose his respect.

The undisciplined and rebellious child creates havoc in the assembly. He or she becomes an example of insubordination to authority to other youths. Boys and girls grow up today expecting to see insubordination among their neighborhood playmates and associates at school. They should not grow up expecting this kind of behavior of their companions in the assembly. It is the misbehavior of undisciplined children in Christian families that makes the job of training twice as difficult for parents who are conscientiously seeking to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

For joyful, united, fruitful assembly life, submission to another is an essential ingredient, "... submitting to one another in the fear of God." (Eph. 5:21) "Obey those who have the rule over you, and be submissive ..." (Heb. 13:17)

Parents, you will do much toward the development of a wholesome assembly by enforcing discipline in your home. Be united, firm, and consistent in your decisions. When you say "no", do not mean "maybe". Explain it if time permits, but do not change it. Of course, sometimes those in authority, whether at home or in the assembly, will make mistakes. But submission is not dependent on the perfection of those in authority. It is important to learn to obey even though at times there may be failure in those who are in authority. "...submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (not just ordinances that you approve of). (1 Pet. 2:13)

### **The Deceitful Daughter in the Assembly**

It is often difficult for us to be aware that we are now living in dangerous times. The Bible clearly states that "in the last days perilous times will come." (2 Tim. 3:1) One of the signs of the last days is deception. There will be those

within Christendom, and even within the Christian assembly, who will profess to be believers but, in reality, will be impostors. The Lord described the situation in this manner: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared." (Matt. 13:24-26) The illustration we see here is that true believers and professors are seen together in the same field. Paul described it when he stated, "evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:13)

The Old Testament is full of illustrations of deception. Jeremiah emphasized this when he said, "The heart is deceitful above all..." (Jer. 17:9) We already reviewed the case of Rebekah and Jacob deceiving Isaac. Let us also note the deception of Laban's daughter. Rachel saw many evidences of deception on the part of her father in dealing with Jacob. It could be said that Laban taught his daughter to be deceptive by example. We ought not to be surprised on a later occasion to find that Rachel deliberately deceived her father. (Gen. 31:34,35) Laban reaped the harvest that he sowed.

Do we teach our children to be deceptive, especially in regard to Christian profession? Today, within the Christian family, it is so easy to say that you are a Christian. In fact, it is really the popular thing to say. It is so easy for parents to push their children at an early age into an outward profession of believing. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God ... who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12,13) True conversion is of the Spirit of God and cannot be forced by the will of the parents. Sometimes in our anxiety to see our child saved, we may encourage him into a false profession and even make him feel secure in that profession. This is hardly what we intended, but it does make things easier if we can say the child is saved, even though the testimony may be somewhat ambiguous.

There is a question that must be raised in each assembly, although we might hesitate to ask it. Could it be that much of the unrest and dissension that is evident in many assemblies is the result of unreal confessions of faith? Could it be that there is a lack of spiritual hunger for spiritual things because there is a lack of spiritual life? It is realized that one can become too doubtful in this area. We can become like brother John who questioned whether any of his associates were saved except he and his wife, and he even had his doubts about her. On the other hand, there is an important lesson for us to learn from church history. Most "churches" that today have gone the way of liberal theology assume that all their members are Christians. It is dangerous to make this

assumption and it is important to be evangelistic even among professing Christians. It is better to have them question their salvation, than to assume they are saved and have them lost for eternity. In dealing with precious souls, we cannot be too careful. Alfred P. Gibbs would never ask a child a question that could be answered simply “yes” or “no.” He asked questions that required intelligent and thoughtful responses. May we as parents prayerfully and carefully deal with the precious pearl that has been entrusted to us.

#### Conclusion

It would seem that these six illustrations should lead us to conclude that an assembly reflects the spiritual life of the families that form it. The spiritual life of the assembly cannot rise above the spiritual life of the families represented. As fathers we must accept the responsibility of leadership both in the family and in the assembly. If we notice spiritual decline in the family, we will also notice it in the assembly.

As a father, I would prayerfully act upon the following areas within my family:

1. Each day the father, with the support of his wife, must find time to sit down and explain the Scriptures to his children. The children must understand from Scripture why their parents believe as they do, “...from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures.” (2 Tim. 3:15)

2. Each day the father along with the mother should pray with their children. They should not just hear the father pray at mealtime, but they should hear him pray for the relatives, the brothers and sisters in the assembly, and the missionaries. Too often our children hear us criticize instead of hearing our prayers.

These two items require a segment of time from each day. Fathers need to trim their schedules in this busy, busy world to allow time with the family for spiritual activities. It is Satan’s objective to use up all our time so that the spiritual life is neglected.

3. Television and the VCR need the knife of circumcision applied to them. There will be no spiritual progress within the family as long as this media dominates the time. It is not only the contents that destroy or negate all that we teach, but it is the time that is robbed from the most important time period of the day for the family to get together. Television, like alcohol, is an addiction. It is difficult to control by restraint. If the parents can be strongly united in their decision, it is best to keep it out of the home. It can be substituted by many wholesome activities.

4. Unless extraordinary circumstances make it impossible, fathers should want the mother at home. Children need their mother at home at all ages. Paul urged the young women to be “homemakers”. (Tit. 2:5) The working mother is just not the same as the mother at home. We may

rationalize in this area, but in our heart we know there is a difference. We may have to get along with a smaller house, one less car, second-hand furniture, a little less-stylish clothing, fewer luxuries, simpler diets, but it will be worth it. Children who grow up learning to deny themselves of some of the “finer” things of life, generally prove to be better disciplined for the hardships of life.

5. We need to stop fearing that we will lose our children because we expect them to be different. It is compromising with the world that gets us into trouble. “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” (2 Cor. 6:14) It is God and the instruction of God’s Word that will keep them from evil, not our ingenious devices to keep them entertained. We do expect our children to be different and we should lovingly and consistently enforce these standards.

These are but five suggestions. As you pray before the Lord for His guidance and direction, He will give you more. The important thing is to be aware that something must be done and to begin now, not tomorrow, for often with the family tomorrow never comes and your children are grown up before you realize it. \*

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The above article is available in its entirety (Parts 1 & 2) in the free booklet, “*The Influence of the Family on the Local Church.*”

Write for a free copy.

## “Fathers” in Proverbs

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. 1:8

For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. 3:12

A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother. 10:1

A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke. 13:1

Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him. 17:25

House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD. 19:10

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*Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou  
hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in  
Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. 1:13*

May, 2013

## We Have Lost The Meaning Of Words

Steve Hulshizer

Writing in 1937, H. A. Ironside said, “One great trouble in this shallow age is that we have lost the meaning of words.” If that was the case over seventy years ago, what would brother Ironside say today? Biblical words have been set aside, either simply ignored or replaced by a modern word which carries little of the original meaning.

It is a sad commentary on the condition of the church when saints who have heard sermon after sermon do not know the meaning of Biblical terms such as: redemption, reconciliation, justification, repentance, regeneration, sanctification, faith, inspiration, dispensation, etc.. Of greater concern is the fact that many would consider their meaning to be unimportant.

This lack of understanding often results in a shallow presentation of the Gospel and the truths of Scripture. Subjective sermons concerning one’s feelings and relationships have replaced the teaching of God’s Word. Well known preachers read one verse of Scripture and spend most of their time speaking on psychology. It is no wonder that many have professed faith in Christ, but have little understanding of the Gospel and of the meaning of faith. Others have little or no understanding of the foundational truths of Scripture. It also explains why many who fellowship in an assembly have little understanding of the New Testament principles and truths being practiced.

The apostle Paul told Timothy “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...” (2 Tim 4:3) “Endure” means “to hold one’s self erect and firm.” Many will listen to an entertaining sermon, but show little interest in the teaching of Scripture. The tedious task of studying words and truths is simply too hard for many, and they slide down in their seats, and may even doze off.

It is time to get back to the teaching of the foundational truths of Scripture on a regular basis, including the meaning of words. \*

## The Beautiful Side of Calvary

Steve Hulshizer

It is not uncommon when the saints are gathered to remember the Lord for them to be occupied only with the ugly side of Calvary and we must not forget it! We were sinners and Christ took our sins upon Himself and borne the terrible judgment of a holy and righteous God for us. However, we should be taken up with the beautiful side of Calvary as well —that side which was seen by the eyes of the Father. Too often we fail to appreciate that which ascended as a sweet aroma to the Father. We need to appropriate the words we often sing.

Loved with love which knows no measure.  
Save the Father’s love to Thee.  
Blessed Lord, our hearts would treasure  
All the Father’s tho’ts of Thee.

All His joy, His rest, His pleasure -  
All His deep delight in Thee-  
Lord. Thy heart alone can measure  
What Thy Father found in Thee.

This side of Calvary is brought out beautifully in the Burnt Offering. (Lev. 1) This offering, which was to be continually burning before Jehovah, gives us insight into the perfections and beauties the Father saw in His Son as He offered Himself completely up to God. Such devotion! Absolute perfection, inwardly and outwardly. Purity and perfection in every aspect of His Person; His mind, His energy, His motives, and His walk. Let us also see the beautiful side of Calvary as the Father saw it. This offering was pleasing to God and we are privileged to be given some insight into His thoughts concerning His Son. \*