

Christian Family – Part 1 **The United and Eternal Family**

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The Scripture today from the Book of Mark 10:17-31, tells us something very important:

✠ “Then Peter began to say to Him, See, we have left all and followed You. So Jesus answered and said, Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life” (**Mark 10:28-30**)

Notice here the difference between what you would leave for God’s sake and what you will receive. You would notice that you get a hundredfold of everything except two things: Father and Wife? Is it fair not to get back all what you left?

Before we answer this question, let us read what Job used to have before his trial:

✠ “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East” (**Job 1: 13**)

Now, let us read what God promised Job and what did he get as a reward:

✠ “And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before... Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters” (**Job 42: 10-13**)

You would notice here that Job got double of all what he had before, except for the children. Is it fair that Job who has ten children before, receive only ten other children? Didn’t God promise him to get “twice as much of what he had before”?

There is something here that may sound unfair! The truth is: it is all fair and just. The saintly people, who pass away and go to heaven are not dead; they are alive with God; as He said:

✠ “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (**Matthew 22:31-32**)

- † “But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living” (**Mark 12:26-27**)
- † “But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him” (**Luke 20:237-38**)

So, God gave Job 10 children in addition to the 10 who are alive in heaven, making it 20, fulfilling His promise.

Same, in our Scripture today, when God did not give back a father or a wife, it is because He is our Father and the wife whom the person would lose here on earth, will get back again in heaven, because she is still alive. You would also notice that God said if you lose “a mother”, will get “mothers”, meaning you will have many churches (mothers) around that would take care of you and your needs. You may ask, what would happen if I lose a wife because she did not follow the faith? Remember that man cannot get married again, as God said in Matthew 19, that man cannot divorce his wife for any reason except for adultery.

That gives us a great understanding of family and how eternal and everlasting relationship it is? This eternal relationship starts here on earth and continues there up in heaven. Nothing can ever stand against a Christian family, nothing can disturb its peace, nothing can break it, and money cannot bring or take away happiness from this united and eternal Christian family.

To give you an example, a servant had a group of children and he was trying to make the point that money can't buy everything. He was trying to drive home his point when he asked them, “What would you do if I said I would give you \$1000 to quit loving your Mom and Dad?”

Everybody was quiet. Finally one little boy in the back raised his hand and said, “how much do you think I could get to quit loving my sister?”

That little boy's question brought out a good point about families. Families are funny. Lots of times, families bicker and fuss. But don't let anybody else mess with them. Don't let anyone from outside the family say anything. When somebody from outside the family says anything, most of the time a family will come together and present a united front. They say that nothing unites like a common enemy. That may be true, but that kind of unity only lasts till the battle is over. True unity is family unity.

You see, a healthy family is a united family. A family that works together toward a common purpose shares certain characteristics. Listen to what St. Paul says:

✠ “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (**Ephesians 2:19-22**) Anytime you see the word “therefore”, it is a good idea to find out what it is there for. St. Paul is telling the Ephesians that they are part of the household of God. They are “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”, meaning God has brought them into His family—this wonderful new family of God called the church. So, when God makes you a family, He makes you a small church where His name is mentioned, glorified and blessed forever. Being part of the family means you must share with the family in all its good times and bad times. You ought to follow few simple steps:

1. Know Your Responsibilities

For a family to function and function well, it takes teamwork. Within a family there are many things to be done and it goes much better when we share these different responsibilities; in a family it may be someone’s job to cut the grass; wash the cars, clean the bathrooms, pay the bills, empty trash cans, buy the groceries, sweep the floor, take out the trash, vacuum the house, do the dishes, wash the clothes, set the table....etc. And let me say this, it is good even at any early age to give children some responsibilities so that they can be a contributing member of the family. Even simple things begin to start the pattern of teamwork.

I read this story about a little girl who had been trying for months to learn how to tie her shoes. She finally got it and was able to do it by herself. Her parents expected delight in the child but were surprised by her disappointment. Her father asked her why she was crying, She sobbed, “I just learned to tie my own shoe,” He said, “That’s wonderful sweetie. Why are you crying?” She replied, “because now I’ll have to do it all by myself for the rest of my life.”

As the church is a family and different people have different responsibilities; your house is also a church and every member has a different responsibility. Parents, for example, have the role of leadership and children have the role of learning and holding unto the teaching they receive from their parents and from the church. Let’s read what St. Paul says about that:

✠ “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all” (**1 Thessalonians 5:12-14**)

So, as a family, we labor, watch over each other and warn against wrongdoing. This brings my second point.

2. Work Hard

The word “labor” that St. Paul uses here, that is translated work hard means, to “toil, strive, to struggle, and to grow weary in doing so.”

Being the leader of a family is hard work; whether you are talking about a family at home or a church family. Why is family work so hard? Because it involves people; people with feelings, struggles, hurts and problems. And to care for people is hard work. But we must do out of our love for God and for His people, our own family members.

3. Respect and love one another

St. Paul teaches the husbands and wives to live in love and respect; as he said:

✠ “Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (**Ephesians 5:33**)

A house that is not built on love and respect will bring forth generations that do not know God for “God is love” and are full of aggression and violence. We will be responsible for this generation before God and must work on preparing them now to be “fellow citizens” of the heavenly kingdom.

4. Correct Wrong Behavior

One of the responsibilities of the family leaders is to correct wrong behavior, keeping in mind the love and tender mercies for family members and the heavenly reward for those who discipline and those who abide by the teaching. Now this is not easy to do, but it is necessary.

✠ “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (**Hebrews 12:11**)

Why is it necessary to correct wrong behavior? Because wrong behavior affects the person’s relationship with God. So, even if it is difficult you must do it, for the sake of your family’s eternity.

I read a story about someone who was called into his doctor’s office? The doctor sat him down and said, “I’ve got some good news and bad news. Which do you want first?”

“Give me the good news first.” “Ok,” the doctor said. “Your tests are back and you only have three days to live.” “That’s the good news?” the man exclaimed. “For heaven’s sake, what’s the bad news?” “Well,” said the doctor, “my receptionist has been trying to get a hold of you for two days!”

So, don’t wait until it is too late, don’t wait for someone else to bring any good or bad news to your family but share with them in all good and bad times, and don’t count on someone else to teach your family but do it all the time. In so doing, remember this last advice for today.

5. Be Kind and Rely on God always

The best thing about family is that when they get together, they always have fun, they pray together, they read the Bible together, they sing church songs and they speak God's words at all times. One day, a father who didn't exactly resemble Atlas or perhaps Samson said, "My little girl was sitting on my lap facing a mirror. After gazing intently at her reflection for some minutes, she said, 'Daddy, did God make you?'"

"He sure did," I told her.

"And did He make me too?" she asked. "Yes, He did. Why?" I replied.

Then she said, "It seems to me that God is doing better work lately."

The little girl here knows about God, His creation and how to chat with her father in love and fun.

St. Paul summarizes for us all these good things about family (explained in parentheses and underlined):

✠ "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone (not holding anything wrong against each other), but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all (wishing all the very best and serving all for their well being). Rejoice always (joy and fun in the family), pray without ceasing (pray for each other), in everything give thanks (being thankful always); for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies (always read and trust the word of God). Test all things; hold fast what is good (don't believe anything that you hear but examine it before you use it against your family). Abstain from every form of evil (do not revenge). Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless (never be angry and use wrong words at home) at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (confession and repentance and partaking of the Holy Communion). He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss (warm and faithful welcome of all family members). I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren (share the word of God with everyone and establish what is known as the Family Altar). The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (**1 Thessalonians 5:15-18**)