

The Church as a Family: God's Plan for His People

- 1.** Our society has made a business of establishing institutions to care for almost every need imaginable:
 - a.** There are organizations to help with...
 - i.** Childcare: both in their supervision and education
 - ii.** Providing for physical needs
 - iii.** Providing for emotional and psychological needs
 - b.** While many of these are good and noble causes that serve a purpose, they are a mass conglomeration of many organizations, all trying to do the purpose of one far older, and far better suited institution: The Family
- 2.** The importance of the family unit cannot be overstated:
 - a.** As the first and oldest institution, and one designed and ordained by God, it outweighs in both importance, and in many cases authority, over anything that man could conceive.
 - i.** It was through the establishment of families:
 - 1.** That God chose for the Earth to be populated.
 - a.** In Gen. 2:18, God declared that it was not good for man to be alone, and in v 24, that man and wife would be joined in one flesh
 - b.** In Gen. 9:7, Noah and his son's were commanded to take their families, and be fruitful and multiply
 - 2.** That God commanded those generations receive the bulk of their instruction on how to interact with their Creator:
 - a.** In Deut. 6:7, in spite of having an entire tribe dedicated to teaching the nation, families were still commanded to teach their children from dusk to dawn about how to be righteous
 - 3.** That nations would gain any measure of peace and prosperity:
 - a.** Prov. 14:34 states that righteousness exalts a nation: All of the social injustices and inequalities that society seeks to fix, will by and large disappear when a nation is made up of citizens who are brought up by families as God conceived, and taught about Him as He commanded.

3. Even taking such a brief look as this, the importance of the family is readily apparent: Should it come as any surprise then that the concept of a family has such a central role to play in God's other great institution, the Church?

a. The Church is described by both Christ and His Apostles with many different illustrations:

i. As a vineyard: John 15

ii. As a flock of Sheep: John 10:11

iii. Kingdom of the Son: Col. 1:13

iv. As a Temple: 1 Peter 2:4-8

v. As parts making up a body: Rom. 12

b. And yet the figure used more than all of these put together, is that of the Family:

i. It describes the Church's relationship with Christ as a whole, being His bride:

Eph. 5, 2 Cor. 11:2-4

ii. It describes the individual's relationship with Christ and the Father, as adopted sons and fellow heirs. Heb. 2:11, Eph. 1:5

iii. And while those two examples are of extreme importance, there is one other area where this model must be applied-- one that is crucial for the Church to function properly, that is our relationship with each other: as mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters.

4. The point that we are building up to is that the concept of a "Church Family" is more than just an illustration:

a. The idea of viewing each other as brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, etc, is not meant to simply promote "warm feelings" towards each other, or be concepts that are nice to think about, but never see application:

b. God designed the physical family to be the center around which societies could grow and flourish; When the family as God designed it erodes, so does society:

i. If we don't see that it is part of His plan for there to be a strong spiritual family within each local Church, then they too will fail to grow and flourish-- they too will erode and decay.

5. This will be the first of three lessons on studying God's plan for the Church as a family:

- a. In the subsequent lessons, we will look at ways to go about achieving this goal, and then a look at the rewards of success, along with the consequences of failure.
- b. But for the remainder of this lesson we will take a look at a few passages that will hopefully drive home the point that it is not simply a suggestion that local churches come together as families, it is a command.

1. I am the Family You Have Been Promised

- a. Turn to and Read Matthew 19:27-30 (Parallels in Mark 10 and Luke 18)
 - i. Consider the sorts of things we've been promised in this life:
 - 1. Promised the animosity of friends, and sometimes family members: Luke 14:25-33
 - 2. Promised the Persecution of the world: 2 Timothy 3:12, Matt. 5:10-11, John 3:20
 - 3. Promised temptations and trials: 2 Pet. 2:9-10, James 1:2
 - ii. We are not promised great riches, an easy road, or any real degree of comfort-- by far, the greater portion of our promises, our inheritance, is as Jesus said in Mk 10:30, in the age to come
 - iii. But one thing that you as a Christian have been promised here in this life-- the one thing that you should be able to reach out and take hold of, is me-- as I have been promised you
- b. The promise of numerous brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers is truly a great one: To know that regardless of what I may give up to follow Christ, I'll be surrounded by a loving family:
 - i. Shoulders to cry on, hands to hold high in moments of triumph, backs to help in the bearing of burdens, voices to join in celebrations or sadness!
- c. And yet, this promise is a unique one in this way: It is up to you to help the Lord fulfill it! I am the family you have been promised! You are the family I've been promised!
 - i. When you look around at those you worship with, do you see a sister, a brother, etc?
 - ii. Or do you see someone you "go to church with"-- What do you plan to do about it? How can you make those ties stronger?