

What Our Families Need Today

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

When God decided to bless the whole world with a Savior, He began by calling out one family—Abram and Sarai. Who would have thought that a childless aged couple could have such eternal impact? Yet, through them came a great nation. More importantly, through them came the great Savior. We all look at our families at times and think there is no way God could use us to accomplish anything. God wants us to know He can. However, in all honesty, most families will never accomplish anything important. Why? Because most families do not have what we need to stand out and be different from the teeming masses of dysfunction. Sadly, “Christian” families are rarely different from worldly families. Yet, just as Christians should be different (**Romans 12:2**), so should Christian families be different. What do our families need right now to be different, to function and to excel?

Discussion:

- I. Our families need God to build our homes.
 - A. **Psalm 127:1-2** is perhaps the most important passage for our families. Consider the following paraphrase “Unless the Lord builds our home, we labor in vain trying to build it...It is vain for us to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.”
 - B. Do you know any families similar to this one? Dad works overtime constantly or perhaps he works two jobs trying to make ends meet, prepare for the kids’ college and be set for retirement. Mom not only works the home job, but she is also out in the professional work world trying to help Dad pay for the computer, the car, the house and the last vacation. Both are interested in the kids’ well being so they not only work but Mom is PTA president and Dad is baseball coach. Both try extremely hard to make it to the kiddos’ special events. This is tough because, Jr. and Sis are not only in school, but also soccer, basketball, baseball, volleyball, ballet, boy scouts, girl scouts and the school play. Jr. is a drummer in the band and Sis plays the flute, but they are three years a part and their concerts are never at the same time. On top of that, Dad and Mom are Christians. They want Jr. and Sis to become Christians too. Therefore, they try really hard to make it to “church” regularly.
 - C. Do you know families like this? Is yours a family like this? What are they doing? They are staying up late, they are rising early, they are eating the bread of painful labors. I appreciate that they are attending “church.” However, my question is how many of these families are making any of it worthwhile by inviting the Lord to build their home for them and then letting Him build it? How do we invite God to build our homes? Through prayer. Consider **Ephesians 3:20**. God can do more than we ask or think by the power working in us. But we have to think and ask. How do we let God build our homes? Through learning and applying His word in our individual and family lives. As **Psalm 119:105** says, His word will guide us, but we have to let it.
 - D. I cannot stress this enough. No matter what our families have got going on, if God is not building our family, it is a dysfunctional failure. If our families are not praying, individually and together, then nothing we do amounts to anything. If our families are not studying God’s word and living God’s word, then nothing we do amounts to anything. What do our families need right now more than anything else? We need God to build our homes.
- II. Our families need husbands who will lead.
 - A. Our families need real leaders. **Ephesians 5:25-30** provides the great teaching for husbands. Regrettably, too many of us think this passage means our families are God’s gift to us to do our bidding and fulfill our every whim. That is not what this passage teaches.
 - B. As leaders, we are not allowed to do anything we want. Rather, we are to lead our families as Jesus leads His church. I want you to notice four aspects of this leadership.
 1. This leadership is to be governed by love. This love is defined in **I Corinthians 13:4-7**. Paul, however provided the example of love in **Ephesians 5:25**. “Love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” How can we say we would give up our lives for our wives, if we will not give up our favorite tv show for her? How can we say we would take a bullet for her if we will not take the trash out for her? How can we say that we

would die for her if we will not live for her? I am glad Jesus loved us the way He did. How many of us husbands love our families that way?

2. Leadership means going somewhere. Where did Jesus lead the church? To sanctification (**Ephesians 5:26**). His leadership was about salvation. Regrettably, most of us are focused on leading our careers or leading our personal agenda. How many of us are focused on leading our wife and children to heaven? There will be a day when that is all that matters to us. Don't wait for that day to think about how you are going to get your family to heaven.
 3. Leadership means taking responsibility. In **Ephesians 5:27**, Paul said that Jesus sacrificed Himself in order to make the church holy and blameless. We Christians have a major problem. Sin. But Jesus did not sit around bad mouthing us, complaining to the angels about how awful we are and how He just couldn't do anything with us. He figured out a plan that would help us overcome our problems. He took responsibility and did not pass the buck. Husbands, leading our homes means taking responsibility for our families. We have got to figure out what we must do to help our wives and children grow. We must not spend all our time rolling our eyes, throwing our hands into the air, claiming we are victims of some cosmic tragedy. Men, if we did not want this responsibility, we should not have signed up for the gig. But now that we have signed up, we have to grow up to the responsibility. Because we are not allowed out.
 4. Leadership means meeting needs. **Ephesians 5:28-29** demonstrates that leading means nourishing, that is, providing what will help our families grow, and cherishing, that is, caring for emotional needs. Our job is to serve our families providing for them physically and emotionally. Remember Jesus' teaching on leadership in **Luke 22:26**. Being the leader at home means being the servant.
- C. Our families need real leadership based on God's word. Men, we are the ones God has picked to provide it. Let's step up to the plate and do our job.

III. Our families need wives who will support.

- A. Our families need to be a team. Far too often, everyone in the family is vying for the leader position. There are too many chiefs, not enough indians. We all know what happens in that situation. There begin to be clan wars right inside the same home. **Genesis 2:18** provides the great teaching for wives. God said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." **Proverbs 31:10-12** says it this way, "An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life."
- B. Regrettably, in our modern society, wives do not help husbands. Wives compete with husbands. Do you remember the song, "Anything you can do, I can do better. I can do anything better than you."? That is the theme song for modern husband and wife relationships. But that is not God's song for wives. God wants you to be a helper who respects your husband (**Ephesians 5:33**).
- C. Your family needs a partner intent on building up the home in the Lord (**Proverbs 14:1**). **I Timothy 5:14** demonstrates that your family needs you to manage the home. Interestingly, the term translated there is "oikodespoteo," which literally means "ruler of the house." The term was used to describe stewards and managers of households. Then **Titus 2:5** explains that you need to be a guardian of your home, keeping your house pure of influences that would keep it from reaching the goal of going to heaven.
- D. Regrettably, some of you are partners with a husband who is not leading the family to heaven. **I Peter 3:1-4** speaks to you. Your duty is not to try to take over. Rather, your duty then is still to help your husband and your family get to heaven by living the godly life of humility and chastity. Our families need this kind of teamwork and support right now.

IV. Our families need children who are being trained in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- A. You may have expected me to point out that what the family needs are children who honor and obey their parents (**Ephesians 6:1-3**). That is absolutely the case. However, children do not know to do that unless parents bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Thus, it is extremely hard to tell children what they need to be in the family. Instead, I must tell parents what they need to be in order to produce children who are what they need to be.

- B. **Ephesians 6:4** tells Dad and Mom, since she is supposed to be helping Dad, “Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” The term translated “bring them up” means to rear up to maturity. Our job is not to let our children remain children, but to bring them up through discipline and instruction to maturity. Our job is to challenge them and make them grow. Our job is not to expect them to be adults today. However, our job is to push them closer to adulthood. Deep down inside, we know children are supposed to be maturing and not just acting their age. Have you ever praised a child saying, “You are so amazing, you act just like all the kids your age.”? However, I would wager you have praised a child saying, “You are so amazing, you act beyond your years.” That is what our families need right now. Parents who train their children to grow up.
- C. I want to share something that scares me about parenting among Christians today. **Proverbs 22:6** says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.” This proverb is a maxim, a statement that is generally true but not absolutely so. There will be exceptions. Some children will be brought up properly and still go wrong. However, since it is a general truth, shouldn’t we see it generally happening? If Christians are, in general, raising children the way they should go, we should be seeing most children raised by Christians growing up to be faithful Christians. Right? Why then do we not see children brought up in faithful churches generally staying in faithful churches? Why are so many of our children leaving for the fun and games of youth and college groups and even going into the denominations if they stick with churches at all? Why is it that my friend David Banning, an excellent teacher of teenagers and author of teenage Bible class material, has noted that only half of the kids he has seen brought up by Christians are even members of a faithful congregation after they leave home? Brethren, we need to be honest. According to God’s word, while some children will not maintain faithfulness no matter what we do, if families were generally raising up children in the way they should go, then most of them should be sticking with it. If they are not sticking with it, that says something about what our families need right now.
- V. Our families need churches that will strengthen the family.
- A. No doubt, our families need churches that will teach the absolute truth on the family. Our families need churches that will uphold the truth on the permanence of marriage (**Matthew 19:6**). Our families need churches that will teach the truth about husbands, wives, parents, children and their roles in the family (**Ephesians 5:22-6:4**). Our families need elders who will hold husbands and wives accountable to God’s teaching on the family and not just God’s teaching on attendance.
- B. In addition to the strong teaching of family truth, our families need churches that will empower us to be families. Too often we are following in the paths of the denominations when it comes to dealing with the family. We want men’s groups to help men be better husbands and fathers. We want women’s groups to help women be better wives and mothers. We want youth groups to ground our children in the faith for us. No doubt, as a faithful church, we are making sure these groups are spiritually based. Any social activities are only secondary. I certainly believe these kinds of groups are scriptural and have their positive uses. However, the more I consider these approaches, the less I believe they are actually going to help our families in the long run.
- C. It seems that everything churches are doing today to promote spiritual growth in the family divides families up instead of bringing them together. About the only thing churches do in which the whole family stays together is the congregational assembly. However, even there some push to separate the family by having all the kids of the congregation sit together some place away from their parents. I am not saying any of this is sinful. I know there are some positives to all of it. However, with families splintering all over the place, shouldn’t churches be doing more to get the family together?
- D. What do our families need from the local congregation right now? Our families do not need another teen weekend, they need a family weekend. They do not need another men’s group, women’s group or youth group, they need a family based study. Perhaps we could try some of the following: a class during normal Bible class time that has parents and children working and learning together in the class, not just studying the same material separately; home Bible studies in which the kids learn to sit still and listen to their parents discuss the Bible with other

adults instead of letting them run off to the play room so they will get out of our hair; men's groups that are not just for fathers but for fathers and sons of all ages; women's groups that are not just for mothers but for mothers and daughters of all ages; materials that we put out for family devotional times. The list could go on, perhaps you can think of more we can do to get Christian families together. Why not do some of them?

- E. Our families are already split up going a dozen different directions. I think it might be a good idea if our churches started working to bring them together more and not just continue the great divide. Perhaps I am all wet. Maybe the denominational model is the way to go. However, I just can't shake this feeling that our families need something different from our churches.

Conclusion:

God can use our families to accomplish great things in His kingdom. God can use your family to accomplish great things in His kingdom. To do this, your family does not need to be like my family. However, it does need to be built by God. It needs to have a husband who will lead with love, a wife who will support and build the family and children who are raised up to maturity. Further, to support and empower all of this, it needs a church that will help draw it together. God can work through us, but we must work God's way.