

ISSUE

18.5

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

January 31,
2016

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Jeff Nunn

Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Arend Gressley

Ben Hight

Jack Langley

Blake McAlister

Brady McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Rusty Scott

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Our Relationship to God and our Family

By Kyle Pope

There's probably no natural bond that we have in this life that is stronger than the connection we feel to our families. Shared time and experiences establish this connection. We see ourselves in members of our family. We remember changing diapers, helping them learn to walk, or ride a bicycle. We remember being helped by parents, grandparents, and siblings through the ups and downs of life, as well as those joyous times relaxing at home, going on vacation, or experiencing the first steps of each new stage of maturity. Hard work goes into family relationships. The tears, laughter, and memories we share with our parents, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and grandchildren bind them to us in ways that words cannot even express—they are a part of us. As Christians much of what it means to be a faithful child of God is to serve our families in the right way. Paul told Timothy that one who neglects his responsibility to his family has, **“denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”** (1 Tim. 5:8, NKJV).



In spite of how strong this connection usually is, it is also clear from Scripture that there are times when Christians cannot allow the bond to their family to be stronger than their commitment to God. Jesus said, **“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me”** (Matt. 10:37). Jesus was not teaching that we should abuse our families. He was not urging us to disregard or treat our families as unimportant. He was calling upon us to value the commitment to Him above the strong loyalty we feel to our physical families.

This can be a challenging thing. When a member of our

family goes in a direction that is contrary to the teaching of God’s word it’s easy to be tempted to compromise our convictions. We say to ourselves, “maybe it’s not so bad after all.” Or, “maybe I’ve been looking at it all wrong.” We have all seen examples of this. Once faithful Christians have been led away from Christ—not by some fleshly lust or worldly temptation that overtakes them, but by the unfaithfulness of someone in their family.

Throughout Scripture we see examples of those who became guilty of this. Eli was a priest of God responsible for teaching the Israelites and offering sacrifices on their behalf. Yet when his own sons practiced wickedness, **“he did not restrain them”** (1 Sam. 3:13; cf. 1 Sa. 2:12-17, 22). David was a man after God’s **“own heart”**(Acts 13:22) and yet when his son Amnon sinned by raping his daughter Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-15), his failure to confront and punish this sin ultimately motivated the rebellion of another son—Absalom (2 Sam. 13:20-29). Tolerance and indifference to sin always leads to more sin!

Why would the Lord demand that we value our relationship with Him above those related to us by blood? Why does one whom we have never seen call on us to be more committed to Him than to those we can see and touch and towards whom we feel such a close connection? There are several reasons that we can consider that are clearly taught in Scripture.

1. By loving God above all we set the right example for our family. As tempting as it is to compromise convictions when our family does wrong, we must realize it does *them* no good to follow *their* example of unfaithfulness. In the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 what good would it have done if the father had begun to practice the same **“loose living”** (Luke 15:13, NASB) as his rebellious son? What if the older brother had not remained faithful? Would the unfaithful son have ever



been motivated to return home if his former family lived just like he did? If we do not remain true to the Lord when a family member falls we offer them no faithful example to follow — we leave them no faithful home to which to return should they choose to repent.

2. Christians have a responsibility to their spiritual family. While Jesus was upon the earth His own physical family did not believe in Him (John 7:5). This very fact provided occasion for Jesus to reveal some of His most profound teaching on the nature of spiritual relationships. Once while He was teaching He was told that His mother and brothers were outside wishing to speak to Him (Mark 3:32). In response, Jesus taught, **“whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother”** (Mark 3:35). Jesus taught that in Christ we have a family relationship that is far more enduring than the physical relationship we have to our families according to the flesh. In Christ we are children of God (1 John 3:1). Every other child of God is our brother (Matt. 23:8). This connects the Christian to a **“family in heaven and earth”** (Eph. 3:15).

We understand this kind of bond in other relationships we have in this life. We feel a connection to fellow citizens of the United States. We may share no blood relationship with them but the fact that we share a common national heritage establishes a strong bond. If you have ever been out of the country you recognize this the moment you see other Americans. Sometimes those who work in a common field have a close comradery with those who share the same work. They may reflect this in the names of organizations they establish such as IBEW (The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) or FOP (Fraternal Order of Police).

In Christ we have adopted a common faith (Titus 1:4). That faith establishes an enduring connection between all

others who share the same faith. The Bible teaches that this faith makes us sons of Abraham. Paul said, **“those who are of faith are sons of Abraham”** (Gal. 3:7). This is a family kinship that doesn't come from the fact that we are physically descended from Abraham, but because of the fact that we share his faith. In our obedience to the gospel we become brothers and sisters in a spiritual family. The Bible teaches that when the Day of Judgment comes, while those with whom we share a physical family relationships may or may not share in this spiritual relationship — spiritual relationships are eternal in nature (Mark 10:30). Sometimes we fail to realize this. One reason we so often neglect our responsibilities within a local church, or neglect times of assembly, is because we fail to realize our responsibility to our spiritual family and cherish this eternal bond.

3. It is a way we show love towards God. The Bible often describes our relationship to God as a marriage. Our relationship with God in



can it be that we truly love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Mark 12:30) if we hold out a commitment to anyone (or anything) that is greater than our commitment to God? This is not an easy thing, but it is necessary if we truly love God.

Christ is very similar to the covenant relationship between a husband and a wife. The church is described as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-32; cf. John 3:29; Rev. 21:9). Unfaithfulness to the Lord is described as adultery (James 4:4). One of the ways we demonstrate love for our mates is by our willingness to forsake all others for them. One of the most common expressions used when vows are exchanged during a wedding ceremony is to promise faithfulness “forsaking all others”—“as long as we both shall live.” How

Loving God more than our physical family can test our faith. One of the most common reasons some never obey the gospel is the misguided view that if they obey the truth it somehow determines whether family members they love who have not obeyed the truth are saved or lost. The Bible says, **“Each of us shall give account of himself to God”** (Rom. 14:12). If I fail to follow God’s word it does nothing (apart from the poor influence it provides) that changes the spiritual condition of family members. Passengers on airplanes are told that if the cabin loses pressure and a mask drops, they should first put on their own air mask and then try to help others put on theirs. Is this selfish? No. Insuring your own safety is the best way to be able to help others insure their own. If parents, children, or even our spouse is not faithful to the Lord what will we do? How will we respond? Do we love them by failing to help them insure their own spiritual safety? No. When we love God more than all others, we truly love our family in a way that is the most full, complete, and enduring.



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