

*In
search
of*

Truth and Right

Tim Henderson, Editor

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"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." Phil. 4:8 (NASB-U)

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Serving God Will Help Your Family Meet Modern Challenges

By Gary Henry

To his Ephesian brethren, Paul wrote, *"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil"* (Ephesians 5:15,16). The more evil the environment in which the Christian must live, the more necessary it is to be careful and to be strong in the Lord.

Here at the end of the twentieth century, Christians in America know something about what Paul meant when he said that "the days are evil." From nearly every direction, our culture threatens our faith. The person who takes seriously his relationship to Christ can't help being concerned about what the future holds. And for many of us, the spiritual survival of our *families* heads the list of our concerns. Modern challenges to the family are as deadly as they are real.

The wave of sexual promiscuity that has resulted from the Sexual Revolution strikes at the very heart of the family: the mutually faithful one-flesh relationship between husband and wife. Homosexuality promises to redefine the very concept of what a family is. Rampant divorce has made it impossible for children to have any confidence that their home will hold together long enough for them to grow up. The children's rights and social parenting movements are advocating that children be raised by the state rather than their parents. Abortion, suicide, and euthanasia each have disturbing family implications. The entertainment media, the educational system, and the welfare state all are

TIMES OF SERVICES SUNDAY

Bible Classes*
10:00 AM
AM Worship
10:45 AM
PM Worship

6:30 PM

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arrayed against the traditional family. All in all, it is a frightening array of alien forces that confront the family in our nation.

What can we do to meet these challenges? *We can serve God faithfully in our families!* It may be a simple idea, but it is true: serving God has always been the best way to stay strong spiritually and survive the attacks of a hostile culture.

Think, for example, about Daniel's three friends. In the familiar story of Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were strong enough to risk their lives rather than worship the image Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Threatened with death, they simply said, "*O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God **whom we serve** is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king*" (Daniel 3:16,17). There is more than a coincidental link between these men's strength *in* God and their previous service *to* God. They had what it took to meet their test because they had been serving God before the test arrived.

The same principle governs the spiritual strength of our families. If, as families, we genuinely love the Lord and our fellow man (Matthew 22:37-39), if we have truly given ourselves to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5), and if we "*serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*" (Hebrews 12:28), we will find that we have what it takes to overcome difficulty. To ward off spiritual disease and destruction, a family needs an "immune system," and the immune system God intended families to have is built up day by day in the process of serving Him. There is no shortcut. Without the resources that are built up in this way, there is really nothing that can protect a family from the devastating influences that we have to contend with right now.

For one thing, serving God is what builds up *faith*. Most of the modern threats to the family have grown out of a humanistic philosophy that denies the existence of God. Faith in the reality of God, real trust in Him personally, is what is necessary to meet these challenges. Long ago, John wrote, "*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith*" (1 John 5:4). There is no pill we can take that will give us this faith that overcomes the world. Faith is gained in the daily process of serving God to the best of our understanding.

In the second place, serving God is what builds *genuine character in the inward person*. The worst dangers our families face today are those that strike at our inmost being, our very nature as beings created in God's image. The strength required to deal with such dangers is the strength of deep, godly character. Paul prayed for his brethren to be "*strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man*" (Ephesians 3:16). Character is not built up relaxing in an easy chair; it's developed in the active work of serving God. Families today that hope to survive what's happening are going to need more than the superficial strength of those who merely talk about the Lord. We need the real strength of character that comes from genuine, daily service to God.

Thirdly, if our families are to meet modern challenges, we must enjoy *deep, rich relationships* among family members. These relationships don't just happen; they develop and deepen over time as we serve the Lord. What is true of the local congregation is no less true of our physical families: strength comes from "*the effective working by which every part does its share*" (Ephesians 4:16). The best strength in the world is the

strength of those who have grown strong serving the Lord together. Serving the Lord enriches our family relationships, and in so doing it builds into those relationships a strength that can hardly come any other way.

It so happens that serving God does one other thing for us. It gives us *courage!* Without courage, we are lost. Paul urged the Corinthians, "*Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong*" (1 Corinthians 16:13). The godly family that survives modern culture and overcomes in the Lord is not one that makes cowardly compromise with evil. It courageously stands for what is true and good. Ultimately, the courage our families need today is formed in our hearts as we *experience the reality of living life in Christ*. We must do more than attend the services of the church; we must "taste" that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2:3). When we do, our families will have the kind of power that the devil flees from.

4 Second Sermons:

- *Prayer - Don't give God instructions - just report for duty!*
- *The Will of God will never take you to where the Grace of God will not protect you.*
 - *To be almost saved is to be totally lost.*
 - *Watch your step carefully! Everyone else does!*
 - *We don't change the message, the message changes us.*

News N Notes

Sick:

- Cindy North will go to Cleveland, March 21st for her back problems
- Vicki Renshaw is recovering from a broken foot
- Blake Headen, Alberta's husband
- Marie Roberts
- Terry Smith's brother George.
- Faith Kress, Linda Marshall's niece
- Ed Roberts father
- Grace Lancaster
- Ila Marshall, Harold Marshall's mother.

Nursing Home:

- Hazel Carroll
- Pauline Sellers

Shut-ins:

- Ethel Mahan
- Josephine Clow
- Mabel Fleming
- Rhea Henthorn
- Pauline Midcap
- A card, phone call or a visit can really brighten someone's day.

Gospel Meetings:

- Elk Fork church of Christ
March 25-30—Jeremy Joy—7:30 PM
- Middlebourne church of Christ
April 1-6—Danny McKibben—7:00 PM