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NOT ASHAMED TO CALL US BRETHREN

"Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, 'Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.' Answering them, He said, 'Who are My mother and My brothers?' Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, 'Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother,'" (Mark 3:31-35).

Even at the early age of 12, when family is such a vital and necessary part of our development in life, Jesus made sure His immediate physical family would in no way take precedent over the spiritual family He was a part of. *"His mother said to Him, 'Son, why*

have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.' And He said to them, 'Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?'" (Lk. 2:48-49). While Jesus grew up in subjection to His earthly parents (Lk. 2:51), He never allowed the inevitable close bond that exists even between a mother and son to direct or influence the spiritual priorities set by His Heavenly Father.

"When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.'" (John 2:3-4). But to keep from making the wrong application, Jesus in no way teaches us to serve God as a priority in such a way which results in **neglect** to our earthly families. *"Why do*

you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God," he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition," (Matt. 15:3-6). While it was always the priority of Jesus to do His Heavenly Father's will and to die as a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind, it wasn't pursued in such a way as to neglect the need to care for His mother (John 19:25-27). How, then, do we make sense of His challenging call to discipleship, warning us that we cannot love our families more than we love the Lord? "*Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. 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. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it," (Matt. 10:34-39). When we go back to the context of the statement Jesus made about His true family being those who do the will of God (Mk. 3:35), we actually discover this shocking statement coming as a response to the reason his physical family wanted to speak with him, which was to pull Him away from His public ministry. "*And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses.'"* (Mk. 3:20-21). So let us love our families as the Lord directed. But let us never let our families pull us away from our devotion to the Lord. — Daniel Ruegg "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 66:13). WE ARE WATCHED OVER BY A GOD WHOSE LOVE FOR US IS THE UNIQUELY TENDER LOVE OF A MOTHER FOR HER CHILDREN. Within the

Trinity of God's divine being there is to be found the perfect summation of all of the qualities that were divided between masculinity and femininity at our creation (Genesis 1:26,27). The complementary nature of men and women in our world is a reflection of the perfect communion that exists within the triune personality of God's own being. Thus none of the unique endowments of men and women are insignificant. Each has its counterpart in God's character, and each needs to be taken seriously in our own character and in our own interactions with others. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the matter of love. The familiar texts that speak of God as having a father's love are complemented by those that describe the divine love in motherly terms. The fatherliness of God's love is perfected by its motherliness. If God loves us with a mother's love, this is more than a theoretical point. In day-to-day practice, we should not fail to have the same kind of love for one another. Even Paul, the

strong soldier of the faith, understood the need for TENDER love. To the church in Thessalonica, he wrote, "But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:7,8). A mother is able to touch her children with a special tenderness because she UNDERSTANDS them in a special way. God's perfect love for us, of course, is possible because of an infallible understanding of our hearts, and we shall not be able to reach that level of empathy for one another. What we certainly can do, however, is to make a more conscious EFFORT to understand the kinds of things a mother understands — and to love accordingly. If we seek God, we will seek to love as God loves.

— Gary Henry



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Seeing Christ In The Old Testament Challenge

Ephesians 3:4-5 "By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." While the Old testament was guiding the Jewish nation towards God's promised messiah, it was the New Testament that finally revealed how Jesus is our ultimate redeemer. In light of this, as we study and read the old testament, it is amazing how we can see shadows and glimpses of Him and His saving gospel hinted at and revealed in the pages of the old testament. Spend time this month reading books from the old testament, and see if you can find further pictures and references to Jesus there. See if you can trace themes and patterns in various books that help shed light on the saving power of Christ. "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." 1 Cor. 10:11

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Isaiah 6:1-8

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and whom will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"