

The Essential Church: Focus On The Family

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Revelation 11:15 states “The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” When that Scripture is fulfilled God will have ushered in eternity. How exactly do you suppose we will go from the Fall of Man in Genesis to the consummation of history and the eternal plan of God in Revelation? Do we get there by age appropriate programs, culturally relevant worship, or evangelistic crusades? I don’t think so.

Before there was time, before creation, in eternity past when God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit alone existed in perfect Oneness and unity, there was a Church in the heart of God (Eph. 1:3-10). In hindsight we know God’s plan was to extend His rule and reign on the earth through a covenantal people. This He purposed to do through the Church, through the covenantal Family of God.

In the beginning God created family. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). Adam and Eve worshiped God in Eden. The favor, blessing, and provision of God were evidenced in the Garden of Eden. “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion . . .’” (Gen. 1:28). God intended that from Eden families created in His image would know Him, love Him, and extend His rule and favor throughout all creation. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God to have children in the image God and children’s children in the image of God until God’s purposes were fulfilled in the earth. Tragically, with the Fall of Man the image of God in Adam and in Adam’s progeny was marred until His image was rendered almost unrecognizable in humanity. What happens then to God’s image, God’s plan, God’s purpose?

God sent a 2nd Adam. A 2nd image bearer. This 2nd Adam was Jesus Christ the Second Person of the Trinity (I Cor. 15:45). Jesus Christ was and is “the image of the invisible God . . .” (Col. 1:15). “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature . . .” (Heb. 1:3). The 2nd Adam also has a Bride and a Family. This spiritual Family of God conceived and birthed by Word and Spirit issues from the Seed which is Christ (Jn. 3:5-8). Generation after generation God calls and redeems the elect of Adam’s race to be adopted into this new Family of God to conform them to His image. And generation after generation redeemed image bearing people marry in the Lord and have families that reflect that same image of God in Christ (Ps. 78:1-8). This God will do through His covenantal people until the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God and Christ!

Paul didn't tell husbands to "love their wives as Christ loved the Church" for nothing. A Christian man and wife living out the covenant of God witness to the mystery of the love of Christ for His Bride. Moses directly commanded God's people to "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut. 6:4-7). Why? To extend the law and grace of God in the lives their children and succeeding generations. Remember the promise God gave through Peter, "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all whom the Lord our God calls to himself" (Acts 2:39). God is not just saving individuals, He is saving families. This is the reason why God requires elders to be the husband of one wife and that his children be believers (Titus 1:6). A pastor must lead his family in God before he can lead the Family of God (I Tim. 3:5).

Think about the influence of generational faith through the family. If a Christian man and woman marry and have the average 2.5 children and raise them to serve the Lord and then those children marry in Christ and do the same for 10 generations, that's 10,000 Christians to carry out the proclamation of the gospel. We must take seriously the dominion mandate of Genesis given to Adam and to his seed and the fulfillment of that mandate through Christ and His Church (Matt. 28:18-20). The covenantal promises of God are made to the man of God and to his seed – to his children (Gen. 3:15; 6:18; 17:2; Ex. 2:24-25; Josh. 24:15; Acts 11:14; 16:15, 31-33; I Cor. 1:16). Therefore, seize on the promises of God for you and your family. Lead your children in family worship every day. Be faithful with your family in the corporate worship of God on the Lord's Day. Bring your children to God's sign of covenantal blessing in water baptism. Then you too can sing of the hope you have in God for their souls:

*These Lambs, Good Shepherd, are your own,
The holy ones, and heirs
To promised love and righteousness
And everlasting care.*

*May they in awe of covenant grace
Sing David's song anew
"Lord, even at my mother's breast
You made me trust in you."*

*Make theirs a home where love provides
A shelter, temple, school,
Where shouts of joy and victory
Declare the Savior's rule.*

*O let the Church's love and zeal
Inspire these ones of light
To find the Lord their highest joy,
The Sabbath their delight.*

*Incline their hearts to godly fear
That they from sin might flee;
May they at the great feast above
Their children's children see.¹*

When was the last time you considered that the most effective evangelism was in your own home? Why do we think there is a better plan for the extension of God's Kingdom throughout the earth than the Christian family? Why do we have churches where the family doesn't worship together at the same time in the same pew, under the same Word? I suggest that it may be that our families are still too much like the 1st Adam and his sinful and broken family and not enough like the 2nd Adam and His glorious Church.

¹ "This Lamb, Good Shepherd" Author Unknown