

The Family, Human & Divine

**By Mark Mayberry
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Introduction

The human family is ordained of God (Genesis 1:27-28). When ordered and prescribed according to the will of God, this relationship is a source of great blessings (Psalm 127:1-5). Domestic happiness and harmony belong to those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways (Psalm 128:1-6).

In the same way, God's spiritual family, the church, is also the produce of divine handiwork. When ordered and prescribed according to the will of God, this relationship is a source of countless spiritual blessings: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways will know eternal happiness, health and harmony (Matthew 5:3-12; John 13:17).

This blessed reality is foreshadowed in the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Zion had been left desolate because of sin, but one day she would be called "Beulah," i.e. "Married" (Isaiah 62:1-5). Hosea anticipated a time when the Lord would betroth Israel unto himself forever (Hosea 2:19-20).

Jesus Christ – the realization of these promises – is referred to as "the bridegroom" (Matthew 9:14-15; John 3:28-29). Consequently, the church is the bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7-8; 21:1-2). As such, she must remain pure, holy, blameless, and ever submissive to his will (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-27).

In a similar manner, the Bible uses familial language to describe our relationship with God. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. Having received the spirit of adoption, we can cry out "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:14-17). This exalted position carries with it attendant blessings and responsibilities: God says, "Come out and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:16-18). Saints must learn how to conduct themselves properly in the household of God (1 Timothy 3:14-15).

The Need for Presence

Human Family

As we reflect upon the human family, let us first consider the need for presence. This has clear application to the husband-wife relationship. Woman was created as man's companion and helper (Genesis 2:18). Companionship suggests regular association, and necessitates a significant

amount of time spent together. Solomon affirms that “Two are better than one.” Two may not live as cheaply as one, but they enjoy a better return on their labor than if they operated separately. Furthermore, two provide each other mutual assistance in time of trouble (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). Emphasizing the communal nature of marital love, Paul teaches that husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. No right-minded person hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it. This principle is reflected in the oneness of marriage where a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife, to the point where the two become one flesh. Such love necessitates an ongoing association – presence (Ephesians 5:28-32)!

The need for presence is also vitally important in the parent-child relationship. Both quantity and quality time are required. It takes time to answer questions (Exodus 12:26-27; 13:14-15). It takes time to teach and instruct children in the word, work and ways of God (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 2 Timothy 3:14-15). This work cannot be neglected or ignored; it is the unique obligation of fathers and mothers (Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 2:15).

Divine Family

This principle also has application to God’s spiritual family. Those converted on the day of Pentecost continually devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. All those who had believed were together and had all things in common. They not only associated with one another in the temple, but also broke bread from house to house, sharing meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart (Acts 2:41-47).

The writer of Hebrews emphasized the importance of presence by saying, “let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:23-25). We cannot encourage one another in absentia. Sadly, many operate on the periphery of faithfulness, having no real relationship with other believers, existing as nominal Christians, being disciples in name only.

The Need for Participation

Human Family

As we reflect upon the human family, let us secondly consider the need for participation. This has clear application to the human family. God has assigned each member various responsibilities: Husbands must provide loving headship, wives must render respectful submission; fathers must raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; children must obey their parents in the Lord for this is right (Ephesians 5:22-6:4). In subsequent lessons, we will consider additional duties. However, at this point, suffice it to say that family members must fully participate in the home for it to be successful. These roles are divinely ordained, and thus, non-negotiable. Our participation in the marital and family relationships must be in accordance with God’s revealed pattern.

Divine Family

This principle also has application to God's spiritual family. The body of Christ is composed of many members, yet not all the members have the same function. Having gifts that differ, let us exercise our various talents to the building up of the body of Christ (Romans 12:3-13). God has set various offices/functions in the church: Apostles and prophets served as agents of divine revelation, evangelists are proclaimers of the same; pastors/bishops/elders are given shepherding and oversight authority; teachers provide instruction and direction in spiritual matters. These distinct offices have one overriding purpose: the growth and maturation of the body (Ephesians 4:11-16). There is, therefore, no right for rivalry, no justification for jealousy, no pretext for trivial turf battles (1 Corinthians 12:14-31).

The Need for Peculiarity

Human Family

As we reflect upon the human family, let us thirdly consider the need for peculiarity. Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:11-14, KJV). How is this accomplished? Negatively, by denying ungodliness and worldly desires; positively, by living sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. As a people who belong to God, we live by a different standard than does the world. This principle has specific application to the home. We should not let society dictate our view of home and family, of the husband-wife, or parent-child relationships. We should not let the world set our standard regarding priorities, possessions, pleasure, etc. Let us be willing to be a peculiar people when it comes to the choices that we make for our family in the areas of education, entertainment, recreation, sports, television, movies, music, literature, friendships, associations, etc. The world operates by a moral code that is warped and wicked. God's covenant people have always been expected to "come out and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). Being a chosen race necessitates making right choices (1 Peter 2:9-12).

Divine Family

This principle also has application to God's spiritual family. The church must maintain its distinctiveness in doctrine, practice, work, worship and organization. Just as with the home, society would pressure the church to compromise its convictions. All such pressures must be resisted. The church is the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:14-15). We must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Like Nehemiah of old, let us have the courage to say "No!" when others entreat us to turn aside from the high and holy work to which we have been assigned (Nehemiah 6:1-3).

The Need for Perseverance

Human Family

As we reflect upon the human family, let us fourth consider the need for perseverance. This has clear application to our personal commitment to marriage itself (Matthew 19:6), and the God who ordained it (Joshua 24:15).

Threats come from within and without. In today's society, divorce rates hover at around 50 percent. This speaks of widespread lack of commitment to the covenant of marriage. Let us never forget that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:13-16). Marriage is for life. The only Scriptural reason for divorce and remarriage is when one puts away his/her spouse for sexual immorality (Matthew 19:3-9).

External threats to godly homes also abound. Persecution follows those who follow Christ (Matthew 10:24-28; John 15:20). Yet, if we should suffer for the sake of righteousness, we are blessed (1 Peter 3:14-17). What application has this to the human family? God's will concerning husbands, wives, parents and children is at odds with the culturally dominant philosophies of liberalism and feminism. The "helping professionals" that claim expertise in the areas of family counseling and child development generally abhor concepts of headship and submission, parental authority, and physical punishment. Those who adhere to the Biblical pattern will be mocked, ridiculed, ostracized, condemned, or worse.

Divine Family

This principle also has application to God's spiritual family. We must persevere regarding our personal commitment (Hebrews 3:13-14). We must persevere regarding internal threats from false teachers (Acts 20:28-32). We must also persevere regarding external threats (Acts 4:18-31)

Conclusion

Both the human and the divine families are ordained of God. However, faithfulness is demanded if we hope to enjoy the benefits and blessings attendant therein. Judgment will begin with the house of God (1 Peter 4:17-18). Let us, therefore, recognize the need for presence, participation, peculiarity, and perseverance.