

Families Serving God

Many Bible students do not think of I and II Timothy as books about the family, but family matters are brought up many times in these epistles. I Timothy 1 condemns parent-murder. Chapter 2 talks about male and female roles. Chapter 3 speaks of the families of pastors and deacons. Chapter 4 condemns false teaching about marriage. I Timothy 5 tells the duties of families to widows. II Timothy 1 speaks of Timothy's family. II Timothy 3 talks about teaching children the Bible. All of these and other family-relating teachings are presented in a context of serving God. Timothy was a full-time Christian worker. The church at Ephesus he was guiding was full of family men who served God very actively but were expected to have happy homes. The idea that people must choose between actively serving God and effectively ministering to their families is unscriptural and false. Working hard for the cause of Christ and having a good home naturally go together, from the Bible point of view. Remember that the first family was built around Adam's work, the job God gave him to do. Eve was made to help Adam do his work, his service for God. The children God gave them were also to join in the work as long as they were "at home." We can see that doing a job for God is not a contradiction of family life; it is imperative to right family life. But those who work day and night at church, leaving their families unhappy and their home duties undone certainly are not doing this thing right. Yet neither are those who shun involvement in the work of the Lord so that they can "spend enough time with the family." Let's look at I and II Timothy to get a balanced idea of how to serve God as a family!

1. Both Husband and Wife Should Be Active In The Local Church.

I Timothy 2 makes prayer and soul-saving the chief missions of the church (vs. 1-7). God "will have all men to be saved." The word "men" here in verse 4 is translated from the Greek word "man" in the sense of mankind. It means human beings. The word for "men" in verse 8 means "men" in the sense of male human beings. Verse 9 then speaks of "women." After stating the main missions of the church, this chapter speaks of male and female roles in the church. This chapter is especially interesting to read when you know that the Greek word for man in the sense of a male person is the same word that is used for "husband." Likewise the word for "woman" is the same as the word for "wife." From verse 8 to the end the words "husbands" and "wives" can be substituted for the words "men" and "women." This passage makes it clear that the church has a place of service for both men and women. Notice specifically what it says. Men or husbands are to lead in prayer (v. 8). Women or wives are to set the atmosphere of the church by their modest dress, their humble piety, and their good example (vs. 9-10). Women are not to "usurp authority" over the man (or, "the husband"), but are to be learners and followers (vs. 11-15). Titus 2 says that women are to be teachers, but only of other women or children. I Corinthians 11 and 14 teach that women may prophesy but not in a preaching capacity over men (or their husbands). Paul speaks in Philippians 4:3 of "women which labored with me in the gospel." Romans 16 lists several women who were active in the service of the Lord: Phebe "a servant of the church," Aquila (who served with her husband), Mary "who bestowed much labor," and others. The point is that both men and women ought to serve the Lord at church, but that the biblical structure of the home should never be violated. In other words, the husband's headship over his wife is respected by the church. There is not a hint that active service for the Lord hinders a man from being a good husband or a woman from being a good wife!

2. The Family Is A Training And Testing Ground For Church Workers.

In giving the qualifications for church officers, I Timothy 3 demands that both pastors (bishops) and deacons be successful as husbands and fathers! "One that ruleth well his own house...ruling their children and their own houses well" (See vs. 2, 4, 5, 11, and 12). Of a pastor, the Bible says,

"If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"
(I Timothy 3:5)

Look at all the qualifications for a pastor (vs. 2-7) and see that the qualities required would also be important in the life of a good husband and father! When one has learned to be a good head of the household and when he has succeeded with his wife and children, he is ready for greater service in the church. Leaders should not be chosen because of talent or knowledge primarily, but rather because of the quality of their homes. This fact makes the family a training place for Christian service. What makes a good husband and father will make a good pastor. What makes a good wife and mother will make a good female church worker. We concentrate on quality in our homes, not instead of seeking to be useful at church, but in order to be useful at church!

3. Show Piety At Home.

The good Christian home helps our Christian service outside the home, but much Christian service should go on in the home! I Timothy 5 boldly states that the church will not do what the family is supposed to do. The home has a unique place in the service of God. Here, according to II Timothy 3:15, children are to be trained in the scriptures and taught the way of salvation. The Sunday School should not be the primary place for this training. Parents should make sure that their children know what the Bible says and know how to be saved. Parents should seek to win their children to Christ. Church workers should be expected to conduct daily Bible study with their own kids at home. This will fit the worker for his work at church, and will also keep his priorities right. All Christian work is not confined to the church. Much of it is to go on at home. I Timothy 5 talks about the care of elderly relatives as Christian work through the home (Be sure to read vs. 3-4). The family really should get together and minister in the name of Christ. There are church ministries that can be taken over by a family. These works provide a great opportunity for combining home and church Christian service. They do much for the family's spiritual life! The worker-helper relationship of husband and wife (See Genesis 2) means that wives should help their husbands with their ministry for God. Couples can often work together on a class or a bus route, thus combining home and church in Christian service. This is a good idea!

4. Putting Out Preachers.

Timothy was a full-time Christian worker, a preacher. He possessed many wonderful qualities that fitted him for his life-work. Probably the greatest of these was his sincere faith. How did Timothy attain this kind of faith? Read II Timothy 1:3-5. His "unfeigned faith" dwelt first in Lois, his grandmother, and then in Eunice his mother. He learned faith from his family. Churches are sometimes very excited about telling people how many preachers or missionaries they have "turned out," and the local church has much to do with God's dealing in the lives of its young people. However, children are not really put out by churches, youth programs, or even Christian schools. They are put out, for better or for worse, by their homes. Don't miss the truth that your family can produce the Christian leaders of the future! Your training, your prayers, and your influence can promote Christian service in the minds of your children. Sunday School teachers are sometimes reminded that their future pastor might be sitting in their class, but it is also true that your pastor may be growing up in your home! Give each of your children a good, biblical upbringing. Have missionaries and evangelists in your home as often as possible. Do not engage in the criticism of the pastor at the dinner table. Dedicate your kids to God. Pray for God's call in their lives. Let God develop in your life qualities (such as faith) that would be important in the life of a preacher or preacher's wife. These qualities will "rub off" on your children. Notice that Timothy's Christian mother reared him at a spiritual disadvantage. We know from Acts 16:1 that her husband was a Greek, and we surmise from II Timothy 1 that he was not a believer. Yet she influenced her son toward godliness, and saw him become a true man of God! Christians with unsaved spouses can still do much to win their children not only to Christ, but also to godliness and Christian service. We should all do all we can do to this end.

Decision: Families should not put the church and the home in competition, but should get them in harmony. Home activity and church work should blend into fruitful service for Christ.