

Curing Family Problems

Studying Genesis 2 and 3, and Ephesians 5 and 6, the Christian can see how nearly his family matches the Bible standard. He can also see what problems there are in his family and what the causes are of these problems. The Bible is a wonderful book! But does God's Word also tell us how to fix family problems? Yes, it does. II Timothy 3:16 says that the scriptures gives us "doctrine" (the standard), "reproof" (the problems and their causes), and also "correction" (how to fix the problems), and then "instruction in righteousness" (how to live so as to avoid problems in the future). It is in I Peter 3 that the correction of family problems is addressed primarily. We are also given instructions in other "family" chapters.

1. Do Your Part.

I Peter is about trials and troubles. This book tells Christians how to react to persecution involving the relationship between those put in authority and those under authority. Read in Chapter 2 about the government persecuting citizens, and about masters persecuting servants. Chapter 3 moves into the subject of family relations. Both chapters concentrate on what the persecuted should do about the persecution. The answer is the same in each situation: Fulfill God's will for yourself in the relationship, and trust in God to deal with others in the relationship. What does the Lord tell wives whose husbands "obey not the Word"? "Be in subjection to your own husbands" (I Peter 3:1). What is God's promise to those women who follow this instruction? Their husbands "may without the word be won by the conversation [lives] of the wives." The life of the wife can win over a disobedient husband. Two factors in the life of the wife will win the husband, according to verse 2: a "chaste conversation" (holy life) and an attitude of fear (respect) for the husband. In other words, the winning wife will seek to be both a good Christian and a good wife in order to win her sinning spouse. Ladies who concentrate on being a good Christian (going to church, living separated lives, etc.) but neglect being a good wife (in subjection to her husband) seldom win their husbands. Ladies who concentrate on being good wives but neglect being good Christians also usually fail to win their husbands. These two elements must be "coupled" (v. 2) in order to create a winning life (v. 1). Preaching to a husband doesn't win him. Living as both a good Christian and a good wife will win him. Aim at having him say, "You know, Jesus has made my wife a better wife to me." Avoid having him say, "You know, if I ever bowed to Jesus, I'd have to bow to my wife, too. All God ever did for my marriage was to make my wife critical of me!" A wife must simply do her job as a good wife, and then trust God to work on her husband (Read vs. 3-6). How shall a husband win over a sinning wife? See the answer in verse 7. The principle is the same. Be a good Christian and a good husband. God tells us to do our part in fixing our families by doing our job, fulfilling our roles in the family! How do children win parents to godliness? By being both good Christians and good children (Ephesians 6:1-3). How about parents winning children? Be both good Christians and good parents (Ephesians 6:4). Doing your job will do much to solve the problems. You can't do the other person's job, and it isn't your job to preach to him about his job. Just do your part, and trust the Lord to work in the other person's life!

Decision: Fulfill your divinely-appointed role in the family, and trust God to change the others.
--

2. "Be Filled With the Spirit."

Now notice something about the famous family passage in Ephesians 5. Of course, this chapter tells wives what to do and it tells husbands what to do, but it also tells us how we can have the power to be and to do what we need to be and do in the family! Trace the teaching of Ephesians 5 backwards from the end of the chapter. We read about oneness in marriage (vs. 30-33) and about roles in marriage (vs. 22-29). Oneness is possible when the roles are fulfilled. We see the attitudes that make possible the fulfillment of the roles: gratitude and servitude (vs. 19-21). Then we find the source of these powerful attitudes: being "filled" with the Holy Spirit (v. 18). When a Christian is filled with God's Spirit, he is empowered to be the joyful, unselfish person he needs to be in the home. Most problems in Christian homes come from carnal living--living life under the

domination of the flesh instead of the power of the Spirit. Study Galatians 5 about living a Spirit-controlled life.

decision: The believer who will surrender to God to be filled with the Holy Spirit will become a force for healing in his family.

To pray for God to fill you with His Spirit will not only change your life, it will also change your home, as you are wonderfully changed!

3. Love Your Enemy.

Sometimes people say that they do not love a member of their family. Can love be rebuilt? Notice in the Bible that love is commanded (Ephesians 5:25, Titus 2:4). Love of the highest order is not merited by the one to be loved, it is generated in the godly heart of the one who is commanded to love. By the power of the Spirit, a Christian can love whomever he is commanded to love (See Galatians 5:22). Who is the "enemy" in your family that you no longer love? Heed the instructions of Jesus in Matthew 5:44, and learn to love your enemy-- and to forgive him (See Matthew 18:21-22).

4. Stay and Be Happy.

What does I Corinthians 7 say about dealing with family problems? Remember that this chapter is about questions that arise about marriage. Verses 10-17 deal with very serious marital problems. The main message here is "don't leave!" The easy way out is to get out. Seldom in any situation is this God's way. We don't grow, we don't learn, and we don't see God work when we try to escape our problems. Rejoice in the opportunity to do the will of God in tough situations. Don't run off! Married people who think they can get out of the marriage (Matthew 19:1-6) will not let God heal their marriage.

5. Pray and Be A Witness.

I Corinthians 7:16 says, "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" You know, if certain members of your family got saved or got right with God, your whole family would be better. It is amazing unfortunately that we so seldom think of our own home as a place to win souls. Pray every day for the members of your family who need the Lord, and do what you can to win them all!