

The Church and the Physical Family

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Being a family-oriented congregation means two things. The first thing it means is that the church, all of its members and families, put God first in everything. Well, being a church means putting God first; being a family-oriented church means putting God's family first. We are God's family, and we are related to one another, not by blood, but by the God's Spirit (John 1:13). Now, with that comes putting God first in our families. The family will only realize its purpose and complete its God-given mission in this life if it places God at the top of every priority list. Nothing can come before our devotion and allegiance to him.

For example, Jesus predicted that a Christian's enemies would be members of his own household (Matthew 10:30). Now, in Jesus' day that meant more than dad, mom, and kids. It involved the extended family and a group of close friends with their families as well, but many times throughout history, when Christians were martyred for their faith, it was their own parents, siblings, or even their children who handed them over to be killed, or at least tried to convince them to deny their faith in Jesus and go free (cf. Matthew 10:21). None of this is to downplay the importance of the Christian family. However, allegiance to God must always take precedence over allegiance to friends, family, work, country, authorities, etc.

The second thing being a family-oriented church means is that we collectively, as a congregation, seek to establish balance in all of our priorities and responsibilities to God and each other. The Bible is full of commands and exhortations concerning the family, and each of them is important. The key thing, again, that we must seek is balance among our duties as Christians to the church, to family, to work, and to self last.

The first meaning and the second meaning must be put together. We do not honor God if do not care for our families, obey the governing authorities, or perform well in our jobs. Being a family-oriented church ultimately means that the individual families that make up the church unite themselves both as families and with the church as a whole under the umbrella of serving God and living out his purpose, and his number one purpose is always the salvation of souls and the maturing of the church as his bride. Therefore, families in the church must be missionary bases to reach the lost as well as ministry teams dedicated to strengthening the Body of Christ. A family-oriented church facilitates this function.