

CHALLENGES TO THE FAMILY

Ephesians 5:15-16

INTRODUCTION

- A. In 295 B.C., Mencius wrote, "The root of the kingdom is in the state. The root of the state is in the family. The root of the family is in the person of its head."
- B. The family is under fire – it must meet many serious modern challenges.
- C. The more evil the environment in which the Christian must live, the more necessary it is to be careful to be strong in the Lord. Cf. EP 5:15-16.
 - 1. We should know what Paul meant when he said that "the days are evil."
 - 2. From nearly every direction, our culture threatens our faith.
- D. The person who takes seriously his relationship to Christ can't help being concerned about what the future holds in our society.
- E. And for many of us, the spiritual survival of our families heads the list of our concerns.

DISCUSSION

- I. FORCES THAT ARE ATTACKING THE FAMILY.
 - A. Modern challenges to the family are as deadly as they are real. Consider just a few examples:
 - 1. The going philosophies of the day — humanism, secularism, evolution, situation ethics, etc. — have predisposed many people with attitudes harmful to the family.
 - 2. The headlong pursuit of affluence in a materialistic culture has sacrificed the health of many families to the American Dream.
 - 3. The wave of sexual promiscuity that has resulted from the Sexual Revolution strikes at the very heart of the family: the mutually faithful one-flesh relationship between husband and wife.
 - 4. Homosexuality promises to redefine the very concept of what a family is.
 - 5. Rampant divorce has made it impossible for children to have any confidence that their home will hold together long enough for them to grow up.
 - 6. Anti-family public policy is creating a difficult environment for families.
 - 7. The children's rights and social parenting movements are advocating that children be raised by the state rather than their parents.
 - 8. Abortion, suicide, and euthanasia each have disturbing family implications.
 - 9. The entertainment media, the educational system, and the welfare state all are arrayed against the traditional family.
 - B. All in all, it is a frightening web of alien forces that confront the family in our nation.
 - C. What can we do to meet these challenges?
 - D. We can serve God faithfully in our families!
 - E. It may be a simple idea, but it is true: serving God has always been the best way to stay strong spiritually and survive the attacks of a hostile culture.
 - F. Think, for example, about Daniel's three friends.
 - 1. In the familiar story of Dan. 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were strong enough to risk their lives rather than worship the image Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
 - 2. Threatened with death, they simply said, DA 3:16-17
 - 3. There is more than a coincidental link between these men's strength in God and their previous service to God.
 - 4. They had the spiritual strength necessary to meet their test because they had been serving God before the test arrived.

G. The same principle governs the spiritual strength of our families.

II. WHAT IS MEANT BY "SERVING GOD"

A. Surely, the kind of "serving the Lord" that makes a family spiritually strong goes beyond what we call "nominal Christianity." JO 24:15; JN 12:26.

B. We will find that we have what it takes, as families, to overcome difficulty, if:

1. We have truly given ourselves to the Lord - 2 CO 8:5.

2. We genuinely love the Lord and our fellow man – MT 22:37-39.

3. We "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" - HE 12:28.

C. But, practically speaking, how does serving God help protect our families?

D. To ward off spiritual disease and destruction, a family needs an "immune system."

1. The immune system God intended families to have is built up day by day in the process of serving Him — there is no shortcut.

2. Without the resources that are built up in this way, there is really nothing that can protect a family from the devastating influences that we have to contend with right now.

E. Look now at the strength that is built up over time as a family devotes itself to God.

III. HOW SERVING GOD HELPS A FAMILY MEET MODERN CHALLENGES

A. It builds faith.

1. Most of the modern threats to the family have grown out of a humanistic philosophy that denies the existence of God.

2. Faith in the reality of God, real trust in Him personally, is what is necessary to meet these challenges.

3. Long ago, John wrote, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith" (1 JN 5:4, 5). Cf. EP 6:10, 11; HE. 11:33,34.

4. There is no pill we can take that will give us this faith that overcomes the world.

5. Faith is gained in the daily process of serving God to the best of our understanding.

6. If we are to "stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10, 11), we must prepare to do so.

B. It builds genuine character in the inward person.

1. The worst dangers our families face today are those that strike at our inmost being, our very nature as beings created in God's image.

a. The strength required to deal with such dangers is the strength of deep, godly character. Cf. 2 PE 1:5-11.

b. Paul prayed for his brethren to be "strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" – EP 3:16.

c. In spiritual warfare, we need the spiritual resources of godly character.

2. Character is not built up relaxing in an easy chair; it's developed in the active work of serving God. Cf. 1 CO 15:58.

3. Families today that hope to survive what's happening are going to need more than the superficial strength of those who merely talk about the Lord.

4. We need the real strength of character that comes from genuine, daily service to God.

C. It builds deep, rich relationships in the family.

1. These relationships don't just happen — they develop and deepen over time as they serve the Lord.

2. What is true of the local congregation is no less true of our physical families: strength comes from “the effective working by which every part does its share” EP 4:16.
 - a. The best strength in the world is the strength of those who have grown strong serving the Lord together.
 - b. Mutual edification makes for real strength - RO 1:12; 15:1.
3. Serving the Lord enriches our family relationships, and in so doing it builds into

CONCLUSION

- A. Serving God also builds one other thing in a family: courage!
 1. The devil would like to defeat us with fear and despair.
 2. Without courage, we are lost - 1 CO 16:13. Cf. EP 6:13.
 3. We need to make up our minds which side we are on — we cannot conquer sin while compromising with it.
 4. The godly family that survives modern culture and overcomes in the Lord is not one that makes cowardly compromise with evil — it is one that courageously stands for what is true and good.
- B. Ultimately, the courage our families need today is formed in our hearts as we experience the reality of living life in Christ.
- C. We must do more than attend the services of the church — we must “taste” that the Lord is gracious – 1 PE 2:3.
- D. When we do, our families will have the kind of power that the devil flees from.