

EPHESIANS: THE CHURCH FROM START TO FINISH
"Part XIV: Solving Great Social Ills By Parent-Child Spiritual Renewal"
(Ephesians 6:1-4)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) The last two copies of Newsweek I have read each highlight social ills on their covers that were caused by **home life** problems:

(a) August 17th ran the cover ad "Gay for Life?" highlighting the battle over whether a homosexual can "go straight." The Newsweek authors (p. 49) cited the "Exodus" movement as saying "Boys with absent fathers, girls with absent mothers, get stuck in developmental limbo and seek masculine or feminine fulfillment through sex with members of their own gender . . . "

This view coincides with what Howard Hendricks teaches in Christian Counseling For Contemporary Problems, p. 211. Hendricks says that "The sexual deviant has an unusual developmental history which is specifically seen in his **relations** with his *parents*."

(b) The August 24th, 1998 issue of Newsweek ran a cover focusing on the President's character problems in the Monica Lewinski affair. The cause of his character problem according to a number of psychologists arise from the President's "family history," p. 22. The feeling goes that because the president's father was abusive as an alcoholic, the President tries to get by with horrendous sexual behavior in private only to try hiding it successfully as a subconscious way of trying to bury his unhappy childhood memories.

Focus on the Family magazine the cause for brutality coming from children today as is illustrated in this year's spat of school shootings. He relates that when children are emotionally neglected or horribly abused, abnormal developmental adjustments result, erasing the ability of the children to view brutality as evil. Dobson feels parental absence from the home and substance abuse have produced children without consciences!

(3) Jack Wyman, head of the New England chapter of Prison Fellowship reported in a sermon at Nepaug Church that when an area prison was given Father's Day and Mother's Day cards by Hallmark Cards, the prisoners used all the Mother's Day cards but left unopened all of the Father's Day boxes! Problems of inmates with their **fathers** is obviously an important factor that leads to serious criminal behavior!

Well, how do we correct such home life failures of parent-child relations that yield such social ills?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "With the rise of major social ills clearly stemming from home problems, CAN we -- and IF so -- HOW can we overcome parent-child challenges to find healing in our families and society?!"

- I. **In reviewing our "Household Renewal" series notes, we saw how Paul lays a foundation for parent-child roles that is often neglected or SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE for many, causing family and social ills:**
 - A. On the one hand, **children** are to **obey** their parents in **all** things, something not only **not** often done, but which seems **foolish** to many!
 1. Paul's order for children to obey their parents in Ephesians 6:1 is expanded and clarified in his companion epistle of Colossians 3:20.
 2. There, Paul states that a child's obedience of his parents is to occur in all areas of life since such obedience is pleasing unto the Lord.
 3. However, public school teachers today report that keeping the lid on **disobedience** of classroom children often seems **impossible!**
 - B. On the other hand, **BOTH** parents (the word *pateres* means **both** fathers **and** mothers as in Heb. 11:23 [akin to Ex. 2:1-15]) must **stop** frustrating their children to anger (the present imperative verb with the subjunctive negative adverb means to **stop** an act in **progress**), Eph. 6:4a. Our introduction reveals child abuse can produce developmental aberrations that leave children with a seared conscience, so personal problems in **parents** are leading to a society with ruthless children!
 - C. Also, parents must follow God's approach to parenting as follows, something often not done, producing disastrous national social results:
 1. Parents are to **nurture** their children (*ektrepho* in the Greek), 6:4b.
 2. They are to do so in God's **basic, rule-training** (*paidia*), Eph. 6:4c.
 3. They are to shift from such basic, rule-training to **admonition by reasoning** with the maturing child in his **later** childhood (the meaning of *nouthesia*), Trench, Syn. of N.T., p. 113, Eph. 6:4d.
 4. Yet, due to bad relations arising from parental **irresponsibility** or **absence**, homosexuality, brutality, drug abuse and crime rise in children as can be measured in statistics! (See the introduction!)
- II. **Well, to see IF these ills CAN be overcome, and IF so, just HOW, we examine the Biblical text surrounding Eph. 6:1-4 as follows:**
 - A. The fact that Paul orders parents to **correct** errant parenting efforts and **unconditionally** produce **good END results** in Eph. 6:4 means current parent-child problems **CAN** be **overcome!** There **IS hope!!**

- B. To see **how** this is possible, we note Paul's words in Eph. 6:1-5 flow from his v. 21 order of "submitting yourselves to one another . . ."
- C. Well, "submitting", a participle, modifies the verb "be filled" (v. 18b).
- D. Since this "filling" is contrasted with being **drunk**, or **controlled** with wine (Eph. 5:18), "filling" means being "controlled" by the Holy Spirit!
- E. One in turn is indwelt and controlled by the Spirit by (1) faith in Christ as Savior (Jn. 7:38-39) and (2) via leaning on the Spirit, Gal. 5:16-23!
- F. We know from John 14:17-18 NIV that even the **parent** needs to **be parented** by the Holy Spirit or function as orphaned in life! Thus, the human parent can parent if he lets **God** parent his child **through** him.

III. **In SUMMARY, a healthy parent-child home life that CORRECTS our national social ills is POSSIBLE through the following STEPS:**

- A. **Step One** - Take courage that we **CAN** achieve renewal regardless of past parenting mistakes: as Paul's Eph. 6:4 order has parents **stopping a wrong way to replace** it with a **correct one unconditionally to get RESULTS, assume we are not too late to offset past mistakes!**
- B. **Step Two** - A **CHILD** and his **FATHER and MOTHER** must **each** believe on Christ as Savior from sin to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit!
- C. **Step Three** - Then, **each** of these people must fellowship with God: that occurs when **each** (1) confesses any sin that blocks the Spirit's control (1 Jn. 1:9 with Gal. 5:17) and (2) next leans on the Holy Spirit. God produces the desire in **each** to be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, gentle, good, faithful, meek and self-controlled, Gal. 5:16, 22-23.
- D. **Step Four** - The **child** must yield to the Spirit's urges in **him** to love and be self-controlled so **he can obey** and **honor** his parents, Ep. 6:1!
- E. **Step Five** - In this **state**, the **FATHER and MOTHER** are **each** to yield to the Spirit's promptings to be loving, self-controlled, patient, gentle, good and meek. Then they can **stay in touch** with the child, and the Spirit Who is parenting **them** (Jn. 14:17-18) can **correctly** urge the **parents** to nurture in basic, rule-training only later to shift to guiding their child by appealing to reason when the child grows!
- F. **Step Six** - Then **through** God's **Spirit** as the child and his father and mother function this way, they can meet with others of like faith in the local church for **more** edification in these family roles, Eph. 4:11-16!

Application: (1) *No matter what problem(s) we personally face due to dysfunctional family role backgrounds, we can start renewal by relating well to Christ and the Spirit of God.* (2) *Take heart from Paul's order for parents to CORRECT current errant parenting acts to get RESULTS (Eph. 6:4) that it's is not too late to keep trying!*

Lesson: *A wonderful parent-child function that corrects social ills arises from all involved living ABOVE their sin natures by GOD'S power!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

(1) Several years ago, I attended a banquet of Christian radio station WIHS out of Middletown in which Reverend Donald Cole spoke. He is a former missionary to Angola, Central Africa and is now a regular speaker in the Moody Bible Institute's radio ministry. Rev. Cole's program focuses on current events in our American culture and how Scripture's truths relate to them.

At the gathering, Donald Cole related how he often sits on many panels at local **secular** high schools. To questions that arise from the student body he supplies answers that reflect the absolutes of Scripture opposite the remarks of other panel members that deny Scripture's truths.

Reverend Cole told us that after these sessions, the teens generally flock around him in droves where they do not gather with the other speakers. He said such a gathering is not because he is an excellent or an outstanding speaker, for he considers himself just a regular guy. However, he says that these teens have told him that they are so glad that **somebody** like him has **absolutes** to answer to their questions instead lots of wishy-washy propositions!

(2) When I recently visited the Baldwins to examine Joshua for baptism, Todd and Judy shared with me how Child Evangelism Fellowship has had a remarkable ministry in the Soviet Union. Now that Russia has opened up to missionaries, CEF is reaching out to children in camp outings.

But, surprisingly, it is not small children who are showing up at these camps, but **TEENS**. Apparently, the atheism of communism has left such a huge spiritual void in the lives of these **teens** that they are gathering in large numbers at these camps to learn **anything** they can about **GOD** and His **truths**! They desperately want to fill that **void** within left by two generations of anti-God propaganda!

The existence of this "thirst" in teens both in the United States in the former Soviet Union hints that the ANSWER to parent-child problems we face in our WORLD comes by PEOPLE finding a proper relationship with CHRIST! We CAN see our social ills reversed and families restored if we start NOW with faith in CHRIST followed up by heeding God's WORD!