

GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS

"Part XXV: Renewing Household Families: Addressing Roadblocks - Overcoming Single Parent Hardships"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Statistics show that single parent households are on a significant increase nationwide. Consider the following:

(a) In 1960, 80.6% of America's children lived with both their father and mother. In 1990, 57.7% lived with their parents.

(b) In 1960, 7.7% lived with the mother only while 1% lived with the father only. In 1990, those living only with the mother constituted 21.6% where 3.1% lived with the father.

(2) However, single parent households face stresses that homes where both native parents live cannot begin to fathom:

(a) Senior Editor, Joe Klein in the June 8, 1992 issue of Newsweek, wrote "Whose Values?" to counter the "Murphy Brown" promotion of single mother homes. Klein states that "There is a high correlation between disrupted homes and just about every social problem imaginable . . .

(1) more than 80% of the adolescents in psychiatric hospitals come from broken families . . . (2) 75% of teenage suicides occur in households where a parent has been absent . . . (3) a study that tracked every child born on the island of Kauai in 1955 for 30 years found that 5 out of 6 delinquents with an adult criminal record came from families where a parent was absent . . . (4) the ability to learn is impaired, especially for boys growing up without fathers . . . (5) children living apart from a biological parent are 20 to 40% more vulnerable to sickness and 20 to 30% more likely to be injured in an accident. These problems are far more intense in slum neighborhoods where the out-of-wedlock birthrate often approaches 80%."

(b) Dr. James Dobson has a tape out entitled "Non-Custodial Fathers" that interviewed Ed Wagner, a non-custodial father. The interview reveals enormous stresses on not only non-custodial fathers, but that of grandparents whose children are getting divorces. These people have little if any control over the innocent children involved, and they are often shut out of developing or maintaining healthy relationships with them. Both parties often feel the frustration of a surrogate "mother" or "father" or "grandparent" taking their rightful place due to the actions of others involved!

In view of these special needs of single-parent homes, what would God have such homes do for solutions, for help?!

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

Need: "All that we have talked about in this series so far has to be modified for me, for, due to troubling events, I live in a single parent home with special challenges all around me! Any ideas?!"

I. God's order of Church's relationships offsets aberrant home ones:

A. The Triune Godhead functions in the genuine parental role:

1. Jesus announced that He would not leave the twelve disciples literally "orphaned" when He went back to heaven, but would send them the Holy Spirit, John 14:16-18 NIV.
2. This Holy Spirit would minister in a parental manner to every believer under the jurisdiction of Jesus Himself, Jn. 16:13-14.
3. Jesus' ministry is currently that of the universe's complete sovereign under God the Father's jurisdiction, and Christ will turn the control of the universe back to the Father at the end of history, Hebrews 1:3 with 1 Cor. 15:20, 22-24 .
4. Thus, the Triune Godhead with the Father's delegated authority to the Son, Who in turn dictates what should happen under the Holy Spirit in parenting the believer, is involved in **all Three** directing the parenting needs of every adult and child believer!

B. In a mystery form, Jesus Christ also functions as the Bridegroom to the collective body of believers, Eph. 5:25-27, 31-32; Rev. 19:7.

C. Now, this spiritual family pattern is displayed in **human** function:

1. Paul taught that relationships in the Church between spiritual believers should mimic that of a family unit, 1 Tim. 5:1-2:
 - a. Timothy as a pastor was to treat older men as fathers, 5:1a.
 - b. He was to treat younger men as brothers, 5:1b.
 - c. He was to view older women as mothers, 5:2a.
 - d. He was to relate to younger women as sisters, 5:2b.
2. He also taught that married couples needed to pattern their marriage relationships after that of the spiritual Bridegroom, Christ and his Bride, the body of believers, Eph. 5:22-28, 33.

D. Since believers are all children to the Godhead, and are part of the spiritual Bride of Christ, and they are to relate to one another in pattern after the family structure, their correct involvement in these relationships makes up for aberrant home arrangements!

II. Properly relating to others in a godly church thus equips one from a needy single-parent home to function well as follows:

A. Relating well to God and others in a godly church helps single parents:

1. It equips the custodial single parent effectively.
 - a. Custodial single parents often are burdened by being financially and emotionally taxed in dealing with the needs of their children.
 - b. In relating properly to God by faith in Jesus Christ for salvation (Jn. 3:16) and dependence on the Spirit via confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and faith (Ga. 5:16-23; 1 Jn. 2:3-6), they can find God's leading them on how to budget their time and energies to address the financial and emotional needs of their children.
 - c. In regularly fellowshiping in a godly church, their children with themselves can find spiritual encouragement through the spiritual parenthood of the Trinity, their spiritual marital union identity with Christ and the brotherhood of believers in God's family.
 2. It equips the non-custodial single parent effectively.
 - a. Ed Wagner, a non-custodial father, in a taped interview entitled "Non-Custodial Fathers" with Dr. James Dobson, tells of the painful barriers their status erects between them & their children.
 - b. Grandparents whose children are getting divorced, and who witness its resulting trauma in their grandchildren and children are also deeply burdened for all parties, but feel helpless, Ibid.
 - c. Non-custodial single parents or grandparents in such cases can likewise find solace in believing in Christ for salvation from sin to belong to God's family (Jn 1:11-13). Then, by their fellowship with God (II,A,1,b above), they can look in faith to God Who sovereignly oversees His creation to intervene by intercessory prayer for the welfare of parties they themselves cannot help (Jas. 5:16b), and seek surrogate, relational fulfillment in a church (II,A,1,c above), Gal. 6:2; Rom. 15:1.
- B. Relating well to God and others in a godly church helps the child in a single parent home: believing in Christ brings the "orphan" into the parenting ministry of God, Ps. 27:10; Jn. 14:16-18, and attending a church where God's Word is taught and where one can relate to Holy Spirit-filled human "fathers and mothers" fills a large void for a child!

Application: *If part of a single parent family with all of its special needs, (1) become part of God's whole spiritual family by faith in Christ (John 1:11-13) and (2) fellowship with Christ in attending a godly local church, 1 Jn. 1:9; Gal. 5:16-23; 1 Jn. 2:3-6; He. 10:25a. (3) Then, use Scripture application to relate to God, Christ and the Spirit and to fellow believers for taking up the slack at home!*

Lesson: *In great wisdom, God has planned relationships via Himself and His Church for filling the void that sin has left in single parent homes!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the solution . . .)

During World War II, in the Thanksgiving season following the invasion of Normandy on the coast of France, a small, barefoot schoolboy stood at attention beside his desk with the rest of his classmates as their teacher called them to order to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Times were hard. The teacher had lost her husband in the invasion earlier that year, and the class with her was trying to make the most of a very difficult time.

Following the Pledge, when the teacher would usually lead the class in prayer, she broke down in the middle of her prayer of thanksgiving and just sobbed aloud. Soon the whole class, moved by their teacher's sense of deep personal loss, sobbed right along with her. Mustering up all the courage she could, the teacher then pulled herself together to stumble through a very moving prayer of gratitude for her country, for the freedoms enjoyed in the nation and of praise to God.

The class gelled as a unit that day. Twenty-five deeply sympathetic children standing at attention at the Pledge of Allegiance and Thanksgiving prayer had been formed into a surrogate family around their teacher in an instant at the throne of grace.

The barefoot schoolboy in that classroom was named Chuck Swindoll who is now President of Dallas Seminary. He never forgot that event, and to this day says, "At that time in my young life, I fell strangely in love with Thanksgiving. Lost in sympathy and a boy's pity for his teacher, I walked home very slowly that afternoon. Although only a child, I had profound feelings of gratitude for my country . . . my friends . . . my school . . . my church . . . my family." (Swindoll, Seasons Of Life, p. 394-395)

That is what God wants the godly Church to be -- a place of renewal around the throne of grace and the cross of Christ following the costly, painful and often tragic disintegration of homes.

Faith in Christ. That is the starting point, and relationships that arise from relating to Him that begin the healing process for less-than-ideal family units!