

Is Your Family Your Idol?

By Steve & Carol Ryerson

Recently we had a bachelor in our home who is rightfully very concerned about eating in a healthy manner. As I prepared muffins for dinner using olive oil, honey, and whole wheat flour, he spoke at length about the problems with the fats in other oils and in margarines. He talked about the problems with salad dressings and numerous other foods. We were rather amused, though, later in the conversation when he announced in passing that he also eats potato chips and packaged cookies! That brought laughter and some ribbing, which he took good-naturedly. Of course a few potato chips and cookies are not going to kill a person, but he had set himself up for the ensuing jabs by his dogmatic dissertation on various fats and their evils. His lack of balance on the subject brought on the teasing.

The tendency to overstate the importance of one subject or area of life sometimes comes about as a result of a weakness that may be seen in others. When God shows us something that we do not see in other churches, sometimes we want to go on a crusade to help everyone to see that one thing. We may mean well, but we are setting ourselves up for failure on two fronts.

First, when we emphasize one thing so exclusively, we are setting ourselves up as an example. At some point we will make a mistake in that area, and it will become a glaring, magnified error because of our dogmatic teaching.

Second, we put ourselves in danger of emphasizing that one thing to the exclusion of other things that are just as important. As important as good nutrition is, it is not the only important area of life.

Nutrition is not the only subject on which people can get out of kilter. Most home schoolers can cite Scripture after Scripture about the importance of the family. This is right and good, because the Bible does speak of the vital nature of the family. However, it is only one aspect of life, and we cannot get it out of line with other things that are just as important. Initial salvation, walking with God daily, evangelizing, discipling, understanding events in the world around us according to the beginning and the ending (Genesis and Revelation), and Biblical church structure are just a few of the things that need to be important to us.

Age-integrated, sometimes called family-integrated, church is being talked about much more frequently among home schoolers. Many publications and well-known home school speakers are advocating this. For those of you who may not have yet heard about this, it refers to the practice of keeping all ages together instead of dividing Sunday school classes by age. It also involves having activities that are family oriented rather than separate youth groups.

We are in total agreement with this concept, as it comes from Scripture. We have been encouraged by the many apostolics who also believe we are on the right track.

However, being family oriented is not an end in itself. We have talked personally with several nationally known speakers. Most of you would recognize their names, but they will remain anonymous here. We are very concerned about those who believe we should pull out of our current churches and hook up with a family-oriented church. Some of these people boast about how inclusive they are. Why, they have charismatics and reformed people worshipping together! They look into Scriptures that speak to the importance of the family and subjects that will build up the family.

At a very large convention, one of these speakers graciously gave us nearly an hour of his time as we challenged him on some of these issues. He told us that they lay aside doctrine and "focus on Jesus." Yet, in this assembly, they obviously do not even agree on how one is saved because of the vast range of people included. We asked this gentleman how they handle evangelism and he responded that it is the individual members who are to win others. Since they have people with so many different beliefs, we rather bluntly asked him if we were part of his assembly and we talked with someone who was coming to the Lord, how that person would be baptized. Who would disciple him and according to what beliefs? Sadly, he did not have the answer for us except to say that the elders would have to discuss it. His response told us that in reality not much evangelism is going on in that assembly.

Another speaker has publicly said that if a family comes into your house church that has a bad influence on your children, then you may need to consider disbanding that group and finding other people who are more to your liking. Where does he find that in Scripture?

We must remember that whatever is most important to us becomes our god. If our true desire is to worship in a small age-integrated fellowship, then that may become our god. Sometimes people believe that their current situation is so intolerable that they are willing to forsake fellow apostolic believers to have that fellowship. They are sure that they can maintain their beliefs in true Bible doctrine. But what are they teaching their children? They are telling them that being with other strong families is more important than being with those who see the truth of the gospel. For them, the family has become their god.

You see, if a group of people come together to worship and their point of agreement is the family, then they may only talk about scriptures relating to family. If so, family has become their god.

Even though we might remain in churches that are not family-oriented, if all we talk about in the home is the importance of family, if we don't reach out to others, then we may be in danger of making the family our god.

To his credit, we recently heard a home school speaker who said these very things. It was so refreshing because it was the first time we had heard this from the home school community. He very wisely stated that having strong families is not an end in itself, but it is a means of passing on the gospel to succeeding generations. Our families can work together to spread the gospel to a lost and dying world.

There is an enemy of our souls who will use any means possible to deceive us. He knows he cannot lead us astray with many of the vices that are in the world. But this master of deception knows that family is important to those of us who are home schooling. If he can deceive us into making the family our god and dethroning the Lord Jesus Christ, he will do it. Keep on guard. Make sure you keep Jesus you God.

2 Peter 3:17-18 ~ Ye there, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, be-ware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

I John 5:21 ~ Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.