

# View

*A Publication of the Folsom Point church of Christ, 900 E. Natoma, Folsom, CA 95630*

June 29, 2008

## Family

*Family is great, but are there limits?*

Last weekend, most of our immediate family was here for one of those “family reunions.” This particular reunion consisted only of siblings and their kids — no distant relatives, no parents or grandparents of the siblings (they have all passed away). It was fun to talk about old times and memories. We’ve all had very interesting lives.

One thing we all agreed on, though, was that, as important as our physical families are to us, the most important family is the one we enjoy because of our relationship to Christ. There is no question that, given the need to make a choice, we would always choose our spiritual family over our physical family.

Not everyone feels that way, apparently. For some, physical family takes precedent over the spiritual family, almost every time. For example, if a non-Christian relative is in town visiting, some will forego a service or Bible class to accommodate them. I’ve always found that practice to be strange, if only from the stand-

point that one would think that setting a good example for a non-Christian member of the family would be paramount in an effort to lead them to Christ. Shouldn’t we ask, “how will this decision [to miss services] affect the perception of my Christian commitment by

my [brother, mother, etc.].” Jesus told us to let our line shine and not to hide it under a bushel. But isn’t that what we are doing when we allow family gatherings to displace our commitment to learning

and worshipping God?

Others think that family can do no wrong, even if the wrong done is to Christ. This is even more inexplicable than missing a service because family is in town. If Jesus was here in the flesh and someone ran up to Him and cursed Him out and spit in His face, how would you react? If a family member did that, why would your reaction be different?

“Oh,” you say, “If a family member did that, I wouldn’t react any differently.” But when a son or daughter or niece or nephew or mother or father, who once had been a Chris-

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tian, turns their back on Christ and the church, it is worse than that! Or how do you interpret Hebrews 6:4-6? The writer says they are “crucifying Christ once again...and holding Him up to contempt” (ESV). How bad does it have to get before we would say, “my commitment to Christ trumps our relationship by blood”?

My experience tells me that one of the most ignored passages in the entire Bible is in Mt. 10:34-39. There, Jesus cautions us, in language that cannot be misunderstood, against putting anyone ahead of Him and His cause. He says that our commitment to Him will cause division even in our own family (v. 34-36) and that if we love family more than Jesus then we are not worthy of Jesus (v. 37). He follows that with his famous statement that if we are not willing to bear our cross, then we cannot follow Him and are not worthy of Him (v. 38). V. 39 seals the deal: by allowing “business as usual” in these family relationships, we may “find life” here on earth, but we’ll lose eternal life.

This passage is critical. Jesus knows that rejecting someone in our family when they reject Christ is difficult. That’s why He compares it to “taking up his cross.” We love them and we want to give them every benefit of the doubt, and we should. But when a member of our family openly rejects Christ, either in word or deed, we are at a crossroads and we have to choose — Christ or family? A wrong choice says volumes about what we truly believe is important and the strength of our commitment to Christ.

This passage is routinely ignored when a child has been disciplined by a local church. Though I have never heard an attempt to give biblical support for it, parents and siblings will often go on treating the child/sibling as if nothing has changed. Yet, when the Bible uses terms

like “avoid them” (II Tim. 3:5; Rom. 16:17), “not even to eat with such a one” (I Cor. 5:11) or “let them be as a Gentile or a tax collector” (Mt. 18:17), I see no exception for family members. And, taken with Mt. 10:34ff., it’s clear that Jesus did not intend to include an exemption.

Even when a family member has not been disciplined, there are principles here that ought to be observed. If one is living in open sin, doesn’t I Cor. 5:9ff. specifically prohibit our association with them, especially if they “bear the name of brother”? While earlier in the chapter, Paul says that the church should exercise discipline against the particular brother who was committing moral sin, in 5:9ff., he is broadening the context to include all such conduct among those who “bear the name of brother (or, inference, ‘sister’).” In Revelation 2, Jesus warns those at the church at Thyatira who insist on tolerating “that woman Jezebel.” In Ephesians 5:11, Paul not only says to avoid any fellowship with the “unfruitful works of darkness,” but to expose them. What more do we need to convince us that Christians should not put up with or in any way associate with those who persist in sin, and are unrepentant?

Clearly, there is judgment that must be exercised in cases of church discipline. I think it is obvious that a parent must continue to care for a child that is still living at home, even if the church has disciplined the child. They can do that without condoning his rejection. Likewise, a wife must still be submissive and live with her husband as a wife, even if he has been disciplined. And when a child who has been disciplined by the church has his or her own children, the parents of the disciplined child have an obligation to the grandchildren to help them come to Christ. It’s a balancing act, but they should

# Agenda

## The Lord's Day, June 29, 2008

9:30 AM: Worship: Singing, Lord's Supper, Preaching

• Preaching: David Posey, The Story

5:00 PM: Lord's Supper, Preaching.

### Classes @ 5:30 PM

#### Auditorium, I John

• Teacher: Dennis Wade

#### Room 11-12

#### Characters of the Bible

• Teacher: Bryan Byrd.

take every opportunity possible to be with the grandchildren.

That creates some uncomfortable moments, no doubt, but those who love Christ and His word will make judgments that honor both. For example, they will spend as much time with the grandchildren as possible, while not condoning or supporting, in any way, the parents' failure to serve God. That means that purely "social" times will be limited — that's Paul's point in I Cor. 5:11 when he mentions "eating with such a one." It's not the eating, per se, but the perception of acceptance "as is" that Paul is concerned about. And when the faithful grandparents have opportunity to speak to the parents of their grandchildren about service to Christ, they will take the opportunity, observing Gal. 6:1-2.

Let's try to keep our perspective in all of this. The point is to help them see that Christ is number one in your life and nothing will stand in the way of your commitment to Him. The issue is not about how much we love our family — of course we do! It's not about how we "feel" about them or what we "feel" is the best thing to do. It's about living by faith and faith comes from hearing God's word. I believe — that is, I have faith — that God knows best and when he instructs me to avoid certain brethren because of their actions, I take Him at His word. I believe His plan will work.

I'm confident that you do, too.

dp

## Wednesday, July 2, 2008

### 7:30 PM, Classes

#### Auditorium, Proverbs

• Teacher: Randy Clark (Jeff Clark, Assisting)

#### Room 11-12, James

• Teacher: David Posey, Sr. (Zac Brown, Assisting)

#### Notes

Most sermons are available in MP3 format on our website ([www.folsomchurch.com](http://www.folsomchurch.com)) or on CD (see a deacon).

### The church of Christ

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#### Services

Sunday Morning Assembly  
9:30 AM  
Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM  
Wednesday Bible Study  
7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.  
Private classes arranged  
at your convenience.  
[www.folsomchurch.com](http://www.folsomchurch.com)  
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