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Lakeland Hills Leader

Lakeland Hills Blvd Church of Christ - 2510 Lakeland Hills Blvd, Lakeland Florida 33805

What is church for?

By Chuck Richardson

Our fellowship should be the most important relationship we have, and the one that takes priority in all our pursuits. But as addressed in the previous article, it generally doesn't. Even when we're considerate of our fellowship, it is in momentary, isolated, and event-oriented ways. For instance, those of us who attend worship services regularly, rarely, and infrequently spend time with one another in other settings. I know some will object on the basis of their clique relationships, like family who are Christians or Christians they have common interest with, (these relational activities have commendable attributes), but are entirely expected.

We need to recognize these relationships are developed and maintained by material interest and only have value for this life [Ge. 2:24; Ma. 19:4,5; Lu. 20:34-38]. In fact, Jesus tells us plainly that His perspective of relationship, answering them, *He *said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He *said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."* {Mk. 3:33-35 NASB95}

Therefore, we have a challenge set before us: will we adopt Jesus' relationship practices, or will we ignore His practice and continue to give precedence to our temporal relationships? If we choose the former, then I have some tools to help us restructure our relational practices, so that we implement Jesus' practice.

First, I want us to understand we don't need to torch and burn down every relationship to accomplish our restructure. Howbeit, there are relationships that may need to end. So, we start with the assessment of all our relationships and the time spent in nurturing and feeding them.

As an example, if a father will heed the instruction to train his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord [Ep. 6:4], he must dedicate a lot of time to this endeavor in the formative years. Especially if he is to be successful. And many other relationships and activities must be diminished or eliminated altogether. Remember, that no one has unlimited time to use. Work to provide the family's needs, sleep, and the potential sickness will reduce the time you have to fulfil your responsibility in training. So, time is precious! Therefore, the personal spiritual exercise of your family is the most pressing business God has given you in the formative years of the family.

If you are at this time in your life, know this: career, hobbies, and entertainment cannot take precedence over the spiritual training of your family. Husbands and wives, may I challenge you to set down and write down the hours you spend on all activities besides work (except over-time), travel to and from work, and sleep. How much time do you spend in recreation? How much time do you spend on self? Now consider the emergencies that arise that prevent you from doing what you want. If the hours spent on the above concerns are anywhere equal to or greater than your spiritual activities with your family, they're out of line of Jesus' instruction.

I have three activities you can employ to reset and be led by Jesus' teaching.

Family reading, discussion, prayer, and singing needs to be a daily occurrence. I have been negligent in this myself. I have made weekly practices most of the time and yet, I see that wasn't enough. You may dismiss this as the ravings of a preacher detached from reality, after all, it's easy for him to say. Preaching

and teaching are his occupation, and even his life. He has all the time in the world. I'm sad if you feel that way, but all the preaching and teaching to and with others doesn't relieve me of my responsibilities to my family, and it doesn't make it any easier to manage my time in this respect. In fact, I may be more tempted to excuse my work instructing my family for the sake of others. Actually, preachers have the same human propensities as any other. Will it be challenging? Yes! Will it be time consuming? For all the eternal reasons! Do we have to break habits to make new ones? Of course. We are creatures of habit and making eternally rewarding habits cannot be discredited! Will we discover tranquility, peace, and joy? Yes, and more abundantly! So, let us begin.

Family charitable work with and for others (especially brethren) will fulfill the call for the saints [Ro. 12:9-16]. So the family knows of a need in the community. They work together to fill the need. The family is made aware of a brother or sister in Christ needing assistance, and the family all together meet the need. As the opportunities arise and the family has the ability to relieve the distress of another, then the family will receive the praise of those like-minded and especially receive divine approval. But will it take time from our other pursuits? It will. If we have decided this is an integral part of our lives as a family because we are His, then it won't really take away any pursuit. It will be our good pleasure to seek the interest of others [Phi. 2:2-5]. In so doing you may find precious lost souls seeking salvation.

Family spiritual activities that involve other families, especially of the household of faith will strengthen the bonds of fellowship. We need to report to one another of good things God has done for us and rejoice together in prayers for courage to be bold [Ac. 4:23-31]. When distress over persecution comes, we need to be together to strengthen one another and pray for those afflicted [Ac. 12:12]. I am convinced we will grow in our appreciation, love, and interest in one another when we decide to set time aside regularly apart from the designated worship assemblies to read, study, pray, and sing with other families. I suggest that we set aside a time for this once a month and ask one or more families to join us to praise the Lord [Ac. 2:46-47; 10:48; 16:15,33-34]. Invite others outside the body of Christ to participate with you in these activities. Have a singing, a reading, even taking a book of the bible to read and discuss, a prayer for specific needs of individuals, families, or the nation. Prayer gatherings for thanksgiving, or combination of all of these, just do it.

Challenging, maybe, but exciting and rewarding for heaven-ward seekers [Co. 3:1-5]. May I beg you to consider these three spiritual building activities, for your salvation and others.