**RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY MEMBERS**

Sunday School Lesson 8

*Building Right Relationships*

Matthew 10:37

4/23/2023

**Introduction:** In today’s lesson, we are going to be looking at some relationship principles for dealing with other family members outside of spousal and parental/child relationships. These family members may include siblings, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, cousins, grandparents, in-laws, and more distant relatives. Each person will likely have some different experiences when it comes to their overall family, as there may be great variety in the size and interaction of the family. We see that Jesus Christ had to deal with relationships with His earthly family, as He had several siblings mentioned in the Bible as well as a cousin and kinsmen. As always, He is our perfect example of how we ought to properly interact with our family members. While some of the family culture might have been different during the times of both the Old and New Testament, the instruction in the Word of God is timeless and sure. The Bible principles that we look at today will be very generalized to cover the various familial relationships mentioned above. As we have noted, family is meant to be a wonderful thing. The family was designed by God. Yet, we also see in Scriptures that families can be the source of great angst and frustration. This is because sin corrupts everything that it touches. Consequently, the perfect family does not exist on earth today. Although this is true, we can strive to have the best family relationships that will honor God and be obedient to His Word.

1. **OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FAMILY MEMBERS SHOULD NEVER TAKE PRECEDENT OVER OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE LORD.**

* ***Matthew 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Luke 2:49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?(Genesis 22:11-12)*** The Lord Jesus Christ made it plain that there was no place for a disciple that was not willing to put the Lord first even above family. When His mother Mary spoke to Him about being in the temple and not with them, He reminded her that His focus was on doing the work of His Heavenly Father. At the start of this lesson, we observed that the most important relationship that we have is the one that we have with the Lord. Yet, does this show itself out in the decisions we make between family and the Lord. I’ve seen individuals choose their family over the Lord many times. A husband or wife will stop going to church because their spouse has some ill will toward the Lord or religion in general. Parents will choose their children’s entertainment or perceived happiness over the Lord, and they inadvertently teach their children that God is not in first place. Regarding extended family, why would we ever let them take precedent over the Lord? Is our last name more important than the name of the Lord? We must keep a proper perspective on the Lord being over our family.

1. **WE MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO LET FAMILY PRESSURES DICTATE OUR DECISIONS.**

* ***Matthew 10:21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.*** ***John 7:3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. 4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.*** In connection with keeping God first over family, it’s important for us to understand that family will put pressure on us to do certain things. The Lord Jesus had to deal with family pressures from His own siblings. They could not understand why He would not go to the feast with the rest of the family. They could not understand why He wouldn’t want to be made known before all of Jerusalem. They tried to pressure Him into going with them, but He would not yield. Likewise, we must be careful not to yield to family pressures. It’s often the case that family pressure can be more difficult than even peer pressure. There is a sentimental component to the family pressure. We must choose obedience to the Lord over sentimental feelings. We must choose to do right over appeasing someone in our family. Once we open that door of giving in to pressure, we can expect for it to continue to be opened.

1. **WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT FAMILY MEMBERS ARE A USUAL SOURCE OF CRITICISM.**

* ***1 Samuel 17:28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. Genesis 37:18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. 19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.*** David and Joseph both had to deal with difficult brothers. David’s brother criticized him for wanting to go and fight Goliath. The Lord also had to deal with criticism. We noted His brothers a moment ago, and it is important to note that those brothers did not believe at first. They were critical of Him. We know that whatever kinsmen were in His hometown were also critical of Him. If you purpose to do anything for the Lord, you can expect that the criticism is likely to come from those within your own family. You cannot let that criticism prevent you from serving God (see the above point about family pressure).

1. **WE MUST PRACTICE CONSISTENCY IN OUR SEPARATION, EVEN WITH FAMILY.**

* ***2 Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 2 Thessalonians 3:6***
* ***Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*** What are family members entitled to Biblically from us? Are we expected to handle them differently because they are family? We don’t find any such commands in Scripture (except any previously outlined). In fact, the New Testament puts the emphasis on the family of God over the extended family. Within the family, the focus is put on those within your household. Thus, there is no Biblical command of family fellowship. Yet, many believers engage in ungodly fellowships with individuals because of their family relation. Parents allow their children to “hang out” with cousins who they would not otherwise let them fellowship with. Again, this reverts back to the family pressure and fear of upsetting someone in the family. Ultimately, we have a responsibility to guard ourselves as well as those of our actual household.

1. **WE MUST GUARD AGAINST ENTANGLEMENT IN UNRESOLVABLE FAMILY CONFLICT.**

* **Proverbs 26:17 He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears. 2 Thessalonians 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Proverbs 26:20 Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.** The wise Christian will recognize the pitfalls of engaging in the “family drama” that almost every family has. It’s really foolish to meddle in strife or a situation that does not directly involve you or those within your own household. There are folks who are overwhelmed and stressed about trying to resolve family problems that are happening a thousand miles away from them. Why focus your efforts on a situation that you do not have the power to solve, aside from the power of prayer? You must keep in mind that family members will often seek outside agreement from extended family to support whatever position they have taken against another family member. It will often be presented in a harmless way, but the end result is to draw you into whatever situation is taking place.

1. **WE SHOULD USE OUR FAMILY CONNECTION TO POINT FAMILY MEMBERS TO CHRIST.**

* ***Colossians 4:3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: 2 Corinthians 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*** We ought to be constantly praying and seeking for a door of utterance to share the Gospel with others. Paul was regularly seeking some way to connect with those who needed the Gospel. He became all things to all men. He just wanted to see people saved. When it comes to our family members, we ought to seek to seize any opportunity we can to point them to Christ. Perhaps, that family member will listen to you tell them about the Gospel. Make it a matter of prayer and earnest desire to see the Lord use you to reach those family members who are without Christ.