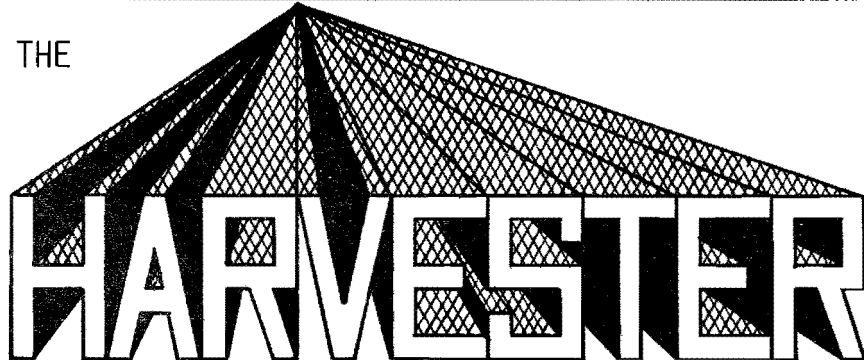


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"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

October 1987

No. 022

THE FAMILY OF GOD

The dictionary defines "family" as "... a group comprising immediate kindred; esp., the group formed of parents and children." We usually take our membership in our immediate family group pretty much for granted; we did nothing on our own to become a member. We simply by birth became a part of it and partaker of the benefits -- care, nurture, training, education, comfort, discipline, etc.

How precious are the family ties that we all enjoy! And yet, to be a member of the family of God transcends any earthly relationships of which we are capable. Jesus himself placed secondary importance upon his physical family. Mark 3:31-35 records where Jesus' mother and

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brethren sent unto him, calling him, and he responded, *"Who is my mother and my brethren? ... For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."*

What a blessing that all who believe are eligible to become children of God and thus members of God's family. John 1:12, *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* Gal. 3:26-27 further explains, *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* The new birth -- and thus entrance into a new family unit -- was explained to Nicodemus by Jesus in John 3:1-8.

Christians need to think of themselves in relationship to their brothers and sisters in Christ in terms more dear than blood relatives. In II Peter 1:1 Simon Peter addressed himself *"... to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."* Such was the love among the early followers of Christ that when there was a great dearth, the disciples determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea (Acts 11:27-30). Even earlier than this, in Acts 4, we read of the believers selling lands or houses and distribution being made to every man according as he had need.

Paul, in I Cor. 12, spoke of this same spirit in these terms: (verses 25 and 26) *"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it."* In

teaching of showing faith through works, James used the example of ministering to a brother or sister in need (2:15-16). Jesus said in Matt. 25:35-40 that when food, drink, shelter or clothing is provided to his brethren, it is provided to Him.

When his life was threatened by Jezebel, Elijah thought he was the only one of God's family remaining faithful (I Kings 19:10, 14). Sometimes our limited vision, our limited visiting, our limited contact with other Christians can mislead us into a similar state of mind. This can be countered by utilizing every opportunity to have fellowship and association with other members of God's family. The Romans (12:10) were told to, *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."*

Proper respect, love, and appreciation for God's family and our part in it might be enhanced by thinking of Eph. 3:14-15 which refers to the Father and says, *"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."* To be a member of that family by reason of God being our Father, we must love Jesus. (John 8:42 - *"If God were your Father, ye would love me ..."*) And, we must love our brethren. I John 4:20 declares, *"... for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"* Verse 21 continues, *"And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."*

There is strength, joy, and assurance in being a part of God's family. Let us be followers of God as dear children (Eph. 5:1).

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FROM THE SCRIPTURES ...

[Editor's Note: This month's subject was submitted by Marty Livingston of Oxford, Alabama.]

I will answer your question by reading from the scriptures.

...I can not go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak. (Numbers 24:13)

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8,9)

I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts. (Isaiah 65:2)

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men. (Mark 7:7)

...We ought to obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God ... for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Romans 10:17; 14:23)

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (I Corinthians 1:25)

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. (I Corinthians 3:19,20)

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8)

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. (I Timothy 4:16)

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (I Thessalonians 5:21)

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son. (II John 9)

My friend, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16)

AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS

(A Series to Promote Church Attendance)

Until the time of their captivity, the children of Israel constantly had trouble with the sin of idolatry. It was during Solomon's reign that the following warning was given. "But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb

and a byword among all people:"(1 Kings 9:6,7) Alas, but Solomon himself, the most powerful and wealthy and wisest king at that time, also fell victim to worshipping false gods (1 Kings 11:4-8).

Today it is not much different. Christians have been likewise warned to stay away from idols. *"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."*(1 Cor. 10:14) *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."*(1 John 5:21) Unfortunately, many of us are still guilty of idolatry, whether we think so or not.

The dictionary tells us an idol is "an image used as an object of worship; a false god". What comes to mind for most people are the small statues and "golden calves". That basically was true during the OT era. But the devil has become more subtle and trickier in disguising his weapons in this age and time. Idols now come in forms as never imagined before!

To be frank, an idol is anything that takes us away from worshipping and serving *"the living and true God"*(1 Thess. 1:9). If we continually choose to do something other than attend the worship service because of a greater desire, then we are practicing idolatry. Our job, our friends, our family, even a hobby can become an "idol" if we spend all our time in it, to the point that we totally ignore God.

Yet, one of the biggest idols facing the church today is that of football! I realize I will not make many friends with that kind of statement. Here in Alabama, as well as in several other states, football is the main topic of discussion at this time of year. On Monday morning the office talk consists of nothing else but the "controversial play" or the "exciting player" that won the game! It is interesting how some people will not take a

stand on certain religious issues but they usually have a "favorite" team.

Such zeal for the sport of football has definitely infiltrated the church and has affected attendance on many weekends. Have you ever noticed how much smaller the audience is on a Friday night during a weekend "revival"? (No? Try taking inventory this year.) More than likely several of the absentees are in the bleachers watching the local high school game! This is the very thing that the devil wishes to accomplish. Football can keep members away from the church services better than any "idol" I can think of.

There is nothing physically wrong with football. I myself enjoy the sport immensely. In fact, one Sunday night years ago I purposely missed the church services in order to watch the "Super Bowl". That was wrong and sinful, as far as I'm concerned (Jas. 4:17). But I learned a good lesson then. (A guilty conscience will do wonders for the soul!) That is why I must warn my brothers and sisters in Christ today (2 Cor. 6:1,2).

If the church service conflicted with the "game of the year", would we choose to be in the house of the Lord? Jesus said in Matt. 12:30, *"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."* Our loyalty needs to be in the things of the Lord before anything else. If this is not so, then we are guilty of serving "other gods". Brethren, where are our priorities today? Is it college and pro football, or is it the church? *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matt. 6:33) Well, have we also fallen victim to the idolatrous worship of Football *"as the manner of some is"*?

RAY

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Oct. 1-3	Willow Oaks Church Russell Springs, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Oct. 2-4	West Gadsden Church Gadsden, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
Oct. 4-10	Athens Church near Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Oct. 16-18	Marrowbone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Oct. 18-21	Holdenville, OK	Harry Cobb (Conley, GA)
Oct. 23-25 (F-Su)	Moffat Road Church Mobile, AL 7:30 evenings	V.W. Boland (Gadsden, AL)
Nov. 6-8 (F-Su)	Brushy Creek Church Lucedale, MS 7:30 evenings	Maynard Foster & Tony Whiddon (Mobile, AL)
Nov. 13-15 (F-Su)	Pleasant Grove Church near Alex City, AL 7:00 evenings	Bill Prince Jr. (Oxford, AL)
Nov. 13-15	Godby Road Church Atlanta, GA	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Nov. 13-15	Red Hill Church near Woodbury, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)

ALWAYS SPEAK THE TRUTH and you'll never
be concerned with your memory.

IF YOU DON'T SCALE THE MOUNTAIN,
YOU CAN'T SEE THE VIEW.