

THE FAMILY

In the beginning God created Adam; one man alone in the world. After some period of time unknown to us, God created Adam an "help meet" (Gen. 2:20). I have often wondered why God created male and female of every animal during the week of creation, yet He only created a male human. My belief is that sex and sexual desire were unknown to Adam and Eve until the time they lost their innocence by eating of the forbidden fruit. Today, even though we may not think about it in these terms, sexual desire is the basis for the force of attraction young men and women feel toward each other. After a couple marries, they grow closer in so many ways, and that initial attraction fades in importance. If Adam would not have been "attracted" to Eve in the modern sense, then why would he want or need her? He was lonely and needed a companion. And since it would take some time for him to become sufficiently lonely to desire companionship, God wisely waited until Adam was ready for Eve. How long Adam and Eve remained in this state in the Garden we do not know. One thing we do know, however, is that their bliss did not go unnoticed by their adversary.

The Devil is ever vigilant in his efforts to destroy God's people. He began in the Garden of Eden by disrupting Adam and Eve's paradise. Since then, he has worked tirelessly to bring down those who would submit themselves to God as he himself was unable to do. In our modern day, he has been able to strike deeply at what is ultimately the very foundation of our society and of the church: the family. The so-called nuclear family, with mom, dad, and kids is now considered old-fashioned and is the exception, not the norm, as was once the case. Fifty years ago, a family where divorce and remarriage was present was at the extreme of our society. Today our society is so corrupt that it is beginning to accept homosexual and lesbian couples as "families."

There are many studies showing that approximately one-half of all marriages end in divorce. These figures are actually somewhat jaded since so many people today decide to "live together" instead of actually marrying. It seems that most kids today grow up with a stepmom, stepdad, and step brothers and sisters. In all of this chaos and heartache, the stable, loving, and nurturing environment that benefits

not only the children but the parents as well, becomes nothing more than an unattainable fairy tale. Where is God during such crises? In a word: forgotten.

If God had been at the center of a family's thoughts and actions, the family would still be together. And even though some may cry to Him in times of trouble, they rarely humble themselves and submit to God's will. In the end, God remains an afterthought for most, if not a villain. Yes, some will actually go so far as to blame God for their problems. After all, He LET it happen. The ultimate answer to ALL family problems, and as a direct result, many of society's problems, is obedience to God.

In the average "Christian" family today, church is something they "do" one to three times a week, but God is not at the center of their lives. The most important consideration for family success is whether or not the man and woman truly understand, acknowledge, and try to live within the roles God has defined for them. To do this, of course, puts one at odds with society. The Bible's definition of a husband and a wife is archaic and even uncivilized to modern eyes. Paul unequivocally stated that *"the head of the woman is the man"* (1 Cor. 11:3). This flies in the face of modern thought where the man and woman are to be completely equal partners in the marriage. Paul even went so far as to say that a woman should be in submission to her husband (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18). These are fighting words to the modern woman!

Whenever two people interact very much, there will eventually be some type of disagreement or conflict. Nowhere is this more true than in a marriage. If disagreements routinely become a matter of who is right and who is wrong, the relationship is headed for disaster. There is not always a right and a wrong side of a disagreement; often it simply comes down to people's opinions. Do we buy a minivan or an SUV? Do we have two children or three? Do we send our kids to public school or home-school? Can anyone argue that any decision in the above situations is necessarily right or wrong? So what happens when the husband and wife take sides on one of these or some other issue and dig their heels in? Should the wife always quickly give in or never even bother to express her opinion? Absolutely not! A woman's opinions and her voice in a marriage are just as important as a man's. Yes men, I said it. We are not inherently smarter or in

some way better than women. We simply have different roles in the family and in the Church.

A man is tasked with loving his wife as Christ loved the Church (Eph. 5:25). This means a man must take his wife's opinions very seriously. Peter commands that a man "give honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel" (1 Pet. 3:7). Men are to recognize that women have been placed in a submissive role and are not to take advantage of it! Ultimately, the man has the task of making decisions that are best for him and his entire family. Does he have the right to make decisions for the family even though his wife disagrees? Yes. Is the woman expected to lay her opinion aside and support the decision her husband made even though she disagrees with it? Again, yes.

However, both sides must be very careful in this type of situation. Men must realize that we will answer to God for how we treat our wives. I firmly believe that the Lord will show mercy to us as we have shown it to our wives. Likewise, wives will be answerable to the Lord for how submissive they were to their husbands. Ultimately, the Lord expects husbands and wives to cooperate and work together. In those cases, however, where conflict does arise, the man is the final authority within the marriage. The man should realize though, that the same verse which names him the head of the woman also names Christ as the head of the man. A man's first objective should be submitting himself to the Lord and not in controlling his wife. In most cases, if the man behaves himself as he is supposed to, the woman will fall naturally into her role. It's only when the man fails to assume his role as head of the house or when the woman seeks to usurp his authority that serious problems arise.

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Please explain 1 Corinthians 8 and specifically verse 3 which states, "But if any man love God, the same is known of him." Does this mean it is known by others or known by God?

Having discussed the matter of marriage and celibacy, Paul now turns himself to another question of several he writes about. This time it has to do with idols. The theme of

Chapter 8 is acknowledging a difference between those who are aware *"that an idol is nothing"* (verse 4) and those who are unlearned about this matter - and how to handle this difference.

Before Paul gets into the heart of the matter, however, he conditions the reader with advice about being too much impressed with one's own knowledge. Let us look at this chapter verse by verse.

Verses 1 - 2) *"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."*

To have knowledge is well, but to glory in one's knowledge can lead to pride. To be motivated by charity, however, permits one to learn and grow properly.

"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3).

In 1 Corinthians 5:2 and 6, Paul had previously written, *"Ye are puffed up...Your glorying is not good."*

Paul acknowledges that all have at least a degree of knowledge, but the problem lies in the fact that some feel superior, not humble. This is the essence of verse 2.

Verse 3) *"But if any man love God, the same is known of him."*

Many questions which arise about certain Bible passages can be easily answered by carefully considering the context in which that passage is found. When the context does not appear to clear the problem, another effective approach is to consider other passages or even phrases which have similar wording, even though they may not pertain to the same subject matter. Perhaps this will aid us in understanding 1 Corinthians 8:3.

"The Lord is good, a strong hold, in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nahum 1:7). - GOD knows them that trust in Him.

"Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part: but then shall I know even as also I am"

known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). - "Even as I am also known" by God.

"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage" (Galatians 4:9). - "Or rather [you] are known of GOD".

It appears to me, therefore, that this verse is saying that "If any man love God," this fact is known by GOD and is pleasing to GOD.

Continuing the thought from verses 1 and 2, the man who truly loves God will not be overly impressed by his own knowledge, and God will know the sincerity of that man's heart.

Verses 4 - 6) *"As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."*

With verse 4 Paul returns to his comments regarding idols. Those who have the proper understanding realize that there is only one true God and His Son.

Verse 7) *"Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled."*

But contrary to those with understanding, "there is not in every man this knowledge." This would surely include some who were new converts who had not completely been freed from former beliefs and influence. A similar situation existed at Antioch regarding the matter of circumcision (Acts 15:1-32), where some were continuing to hold to the practice of the old law. Those who continued to eat with view to honoring an idol were certainly in error and "their conscience being weak is defiled." These were in need of further teaching.

Verse 8) *"But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse."*

Then Paul adds that in the eating of meat itself, it does not matter either way. Those with proper understanding that *"an idol is nothing"* (verse 4) could in good conscience eat meat which had been sacrificed to an idol. They could eat with the understanding that they were simply eating meat with no intent whatsoever to honor an idol or false god.

Verse 9) *"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak."*

Such conduct on the part of those who had understanding, however, might be unwise. Those who are weak in understanding about meat offered to idols might stumble in observing such liberty.

Verse 10) *"For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;"*

If they saw a brother *"with knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple"* they might misunderstand his behavior and consider it as an act of acceptable worship. They with all good conscience, although it be in error, might proceed to eat with respect to the idol.

Verse 11 - 12) *"And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."*

By misunderstanding the knowledge of the strong brother, the weak brother would thus sin and perish. By ignoring this consideration, the strong brother would also *"sin against Christ."*

Verse 13) *"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."*

Paul's most commendable attitude, regardless of his liberty in Christ, was to conduct himself in such a way that he would not mislead a weaker brother. If it would require

eating no meat while the world continued to stand, then he would avoid meat lest he cause his brother to sin and offend his God.

The ideal situation, of course, is to strengthen the weaker brother by patience and teaching that he in time might become a brother strong and mature in understanding.

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What did God provide for the Israelites when they complained about the manna?
2. Which prophet did King Hezekiah's assistants approach, regarding the dilemma with Assyria?
3. Who threatened to kill Jeremiah for prophesying in the house of the Lord about the fall of Judah?
4. In Acts when Stephen was brought before the council, he presented a history of God's involvement with the Jews, beginning with whom, and ending with whom?
5. According to Paul, what made the Philippians unique among the churches?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. How long did the flood waters cover the earth? ONE HUNDRED FIFTY DAYS (Genesis 7:24)
2. When the Amalekite man came and told David about Saul and Jonathan's death, what proof did he show David? SAUL'S CROWN AND BRACELET (II Samuel 1:10)
3. According to Solomon in Proverbs, what does good, like medicine? A MERRY HEART (Proverbs 17:22)
4. In John's account of the feeding of the five thousand, which two disciples were involved in Jesus' discussion of how to proceed? PHILIP AND ANDREW (John 6:5-11)

5. The first chapter of Hebrews related Jesus as being greater than what? ANGELS (Hebrews 1:4-14)