

18.05.2019 KEYS TO FAMILY UNITY

That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. John 17:21

I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. John 17:23

When Jesus prayed for us, His primary desire was that we would be one. And this oneness had a purpose...that the world know and believe the love of God which sent His Son to reconcile us to God and restore the separation that sin has brought between God and man; separation that is seen in man's relationship to man – in families and in society.

God wants the whole world to know Him through the unity they see in Christ's followers; unity in the church and in Christian families.

Unity for believers must begin at the level of the family before it can truly characterize the Church. God created families long before He created the Church. He gave many specific instructions to families with the intent of unifying husbands and wives and children into a unit that would honour and reverence Him. His expectations were specific and straightforward whether in the Old Testament or the New: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5). "[Jesus] answered: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'" (Luke 10:27). *Kim Butts*

Christ the Centre: True unity begins with knowing what Christ has done so that His people can live in unity

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. Ephesians 1:3, 7-10

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation. Ephesians 2:13, 14

At the Cross, God removed all barriers that separate human beings.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:26-28

Family Unity at Creation and after Calvary:

We have seen in our previous lessons that marriage is to reflect the love and unity that exists within the Godhead.

We saw last week that God created Eve from a rib He took from Adam. We saw that marriage is the union of 2 persons who originally were one, then separated (the rib removed from Adam), and now in the sexual union of marriage come together again. This physical union produces children who are united by their DNA to their parents and to each other. As the children grow, they are united by the bonds of love and authority in the family.

But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Malachi 2:15

When Adam fell and families reaped the consequences of his sin, God's people lived in the hope of the Messiah to come.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Because of His death and resurrection we who believe are now partakers of His divine nature... *'by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature'* 2 Peter 1:4

This divine nature of love is to be manifested in the Christian family; by parents to one another, in the parent-child relationship and the relationships of siblings to each other. **In this, the parents have a crucial role as they model the love of God to their children.**

Self:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called... endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1, 3

Why do you fight and argue with each other? Isn't it because you are full of selfish desires that fight to control your body? James 4:1

Disunity, whether manifested in the family or the church, arises from self and selfish desires. We put our wants and needs before others in the family. Appealing to self and selfishness is the greatest weapon Satan uses to make Christians poor witnesses to Christ.

Every sincere follower of Jesus must be fearful of self. He must recognise that he has been redeemed by the costly gift of the blood of Christ. He will then deny self daily and allow God to live out His life of self-giving love in him and through him. This denial of self will be manifested in all his dealings with his family.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

The Christian life is a battle and a march. But the victory to be gained is not won by human power. The field of conflict is the domain of the heart. The battle which we have to fight--the greatest battle that was ever fought by man--is the surrender of self to the will of God, the yielding of the heart to the sovereignty of love. The old nature, born of blood and of the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up. *EGW: Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing. p 141*

Submission:

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Ephesians 1:4

The Christian knows that it is his life's work to submit to God daily (instead of submitting to self and self-centred desires). If he lives in total submission to God as Christ did to his Father, then he will indeed *'be holy and without blame before Him in love'*.

It is only as know we how to submit to God that we will learn how to submit to each other in the family. God has created man and woman equal in status but complementary in function. Within a Christian family, the headship is given to the man, but both parents have authority over their children. Wherever authority is given, it is expected to be done in the spirit of Christ, with self-sacrificial love.

Give thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be

to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. Ephesians 5:20-25

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 1 Corinthians 11:3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Colossians 3:20, 21

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Living the Love we Promise

Endeavour (make every effort) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3

Paul calls this the unity of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who convicts us of the merits of Jesus Christ; merits that are given to us freely. It is the Spirit who leads us to faith in Christ; to believe and rejoice in our position in Christ. **It is the Holy Spirit who produces the fruit of agape' love in our hearts which makes us love each other as Christ and the Father have loved us.**

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:1, 2

"My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3).

Is your family encouraged in heart and united in love? Are you an encourager? Do you build up others in your family and love them so that they will have the full riches of complete understanding to know the treasures of wisdom and knowledge through Jesus? What happens in your family when there are disagreements? Do you argue bitterly, or can you set aside your differences long enough to pray together? Perhaps you will come into agreement as the Lord shows you His plan. Or, perhaps, He will give your hearts a desire to love one another in spite of your differences of opinion...How much stronger and wiser our families and churches will be when we decide to fulfil the purposes of unity that Jesus has already placed in us. *Kim Butts*

Conclusion:

'Can you imagine how quickly God's kingdom would grow if the Church was comprised of unified families obediently carrying out the Great Commandment and the Great Commission? If each individual family member, and each relationship represented within each family, would determine to live in unity, and if we were all committed to loving the Lord with a desperate passion, and to loving others as Jesus loves us...perhaps then, a watching world would be drawn to the Father. A family should and must begin with unity –connection, identity, building up of one another. God has given much instruction to parents and to children about their relationships within their families. Only in unity are we able to carry out these relationships successfully, and in ways that are pleasing to the Lord. In order for unbelievers to truly know the love of Christ, they must see it in the unified, loving families that comprise Jesus' Church.

The active demonstration of a family unified in love to God, to each other and to their fellow men is a primary way for the world to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord.' *Ibid.*

I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known in order that the love You have for Me may be in them and that I Myself may be in them" (John 17:26).