

## OUR MUTUAL CARE

**“We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.....”**

The Church Covenant so far has addressed the matters of our faith, the church fellowship, the furtherance of the church and now family responsibilities are addressed. The family is both the fundamental unit of the church and of society. There is no doubt that as are families so is the local church.

The biblical view of marriage and the family has to a significant extent been replaced with a set of humanistic values that prizes human rights and self-fulfillment for the individual. Marriage and the family are institutions under siege in our world today, and that negatively impacts the church.

In Ephesians chapter 5 Paul uses the analogy of the human family to illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church. The home is the first place that Christianity should be put into practice and if it is not genuinely expressed there it will not be carried over into the church fellowship. A spiritual home is certainly a blessing to the church.

As members of the local church family of believers we pledge, in the Church Covenant, to: *“maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.....”* There are three major responsibilities addressed in that statement: First, The Edification of The Family; second, The Education of The Family and third, The Evangelization of The Family.

### I. THE CONSISTENT EDIFICATION OF THE FAMILY.

*“We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions....”*

To “edify” means “To build up; to uplift morally and spiritually.” The Covenant states, *“We engage to maintain .....”* To “maintain” is to be consistent. Consistency is required if the members of the family are to have the blessings and benefits of the family worship time. It takes serious focus to maintain a consistent Devotional Time with the family. There will be many interruptions through the years, but persistence will bring eternal benefits.

What are “devotions”? Devotions means: “Any activity whereby we worship God or show our esteem for Him.”

#### A. Family Devotions – *“We also engage to maintain family..... devotions....”*

Reading scripture together, prayer and worshipping together, all are primary resources for building spiritual foundations as a family.

Here are a few ideas that may help you:

- Eat breakfast or supper together as a family, then have a short but creative devotional time followed by a time of group prayer for specific prayer requests.

- One night a week may be all you can practically handle, and one quality evening together around God's Word is great.
- Dedicate a particular evening of the week to "Family Night." Keep it sacred. If something comes up that must pre-empt that evening, commit to exchanging it for another evening that same week.
- Where there is a will, there is a way!

Paul, in writing to pastor Timothy, reminded him how "From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 3:15) Timothy was exposed to family devotions by his godly mother and grandmother. Paul said to Timothy, "I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice." (II Tim.1:5)

Parents, by divine appointment, are the ministers of worship for the family. The reading of the Word of God and family prayer is a must. It is God who says: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4)

### **B. Secret or Private Devotions – “and secret devotions....”**

Secret or private devotions is when an individual gets alone with God in worship. Daniel practiced devoting himself to God several times per day: "He knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days." (Daniel 6:10)

Many times Jesus got alone to pray in private:

- Matt. 14:23 – "And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there."
- Mark 1:35 – "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed."
- Luke 5:16 – "He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed."

Jesus gave these instructions: "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matt. 6:6)

The spirituality of the homes that comprise the church will be reflected in the church. The spirituality of the church wanes when family and private devotions are neglected.

## **II. THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF THE FAMILY.**

*".....to religiously educate our children...."*

Parents have an awesome responsibility beginning with the birth of their children. They are charged by God to "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) Training is visible as well as verbal. John Bunyan said, "Take heed that the misdeeds for which thou correctest thy children be not learned them by

thee. Many children learn that wickedness of their parents for which they beat and chastise them.”

### **A. Family Schools.**

Let us contemplate the family as an institution of instruction, a school. The natural obligation of parents, Christian or non-Christian, is to teach their children. Parents are, by the nature of the case, teachers, and they are teachers exerting a powerful influence upon their children whether they are aware of the responsibility or not.

The Law given to Moses constituted every family in Israel a school of religious training. “Take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren.” (Deut. 4:9)

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” (Deut. 6:6,7)

“You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” (Deut. 11:19)

Joshua, the illustrious captain who led the host of Israel across Jordan into the promised land, said in his last, address to his countrymen: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve. . . As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15)

The Spirit of New Testament teachings on this subject is expressed in Paul’s exhortation to parents to "bring up" their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4) That is, to give them a Christian education - to teach them in the school of the home initially, for the service of their Savior and Lord.

### **B. Church Schools.**

The foundation of a Christian education should be laid in the home. However, as the child grows that foundation must be built upon. Thank God for Christian Day Schools, Colleges and Universities. Every Christian parent should plan ahead and encourage their children to attend a Christian educational institution and support Christian schools financially.

Martin Luther said, “I advise no one to place a child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.”

The Christian education of the heart is the heart of education. Christian education must primarily teach people to be able to think Christianly and to live holily. True Christian education imparts the power to tell the good from the bad, the genuine from the counterfeit, and to prefer the good and the genuine to the bad and the counterfeit. To pack the head with truth that does not affect behavior is only to make clever devils.

### III. THE COMPASSIONATE EVANGELIZATION OF THE FAMILY.

*“.... to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.....”*

The responsibility of the people of God to evangelize is repeatedly given in the New Testament: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15,16); "You are my witnesses" (Luke 24:48); "As my Father has sent me even so send I you" (John 20:20,21); and our Lord's parting words, "You shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8).

#### **A. Witnessing To Our Kindred.** *“.... to seek the salvation of our kindred....”*

The home one of the first places of responsibility to evangelize. God has not left us without instructions and illustrations for family evangelization. One of the most vivid and instructive examples is the conversion of young Timothy. "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1:5). "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

Being born in a Christian home does not make children Christians. It is a gracious providence to be born into a Christian family, but, this providence and privilege does not exclude the absolute necessity of conversion. Christian parents have as their number one priority the salvation of their children. Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).

The family of the jailor in Philippi was evangelized. Paul and Silas witnessed to them: "They shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God." (Acts 16:32-34)

Our influence for Christ should extend beyond the immediate family of father, mother and children. Our relatives need the Gospel also. "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42)

#### **B. Witnessing To Our Acquaintances.** *“.... to seek the salvation of our acquaintances.....”*

Every Christian has a friend, co-worker, or acquaintance who is not a Christian. Sharing the gospel with others can be difficult, and it can become even more difficult when it involves someone with whom you have close associations. However, we are commanded to share the gospel.

We must be willing, bold and tactful in sharing of the gospel. If we do not is it because we are ashamed of the gospel? Can you say with the apostle Paul, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16)

We must always be prepared to speak of our faith. “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (I Peter 3:15)

Ultimately, we must leave the salvation of our loved ones up to God. It is God's power and grace that saves people, not our efforts. The best and most we can do is pray for them, witness to them, and live the Christian life in front of them.

### **What is The Gospel?**

**“I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you -unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”**  
(I Corinthians 15:1-4)

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