

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Building Families - *Building the Church* Ephesians 4:15-16

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¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Ephesians 4:15-16 NASB).

INTRODUCTION

Developing a family that follows God's holiness, truth, peace and wisdom is so important to the growth and peace of the church. Developing such a family requires first God's grace. In addition to God's grace, it requires love for peace and God, respect and obedience, maturity in dealing with issues, exemplary guidance, quality bonding, commitment to creating a feedback communication style.

In **Jeremiah 35**, we have a case of the family of Jonadab the son of Rechab. This family is one of the most impressive families in the Bible. The godly character of this family was used by God as an example when He rebuked Israel (**Jeremiah 35:12-19**).

¹⁸ Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands and done according to all that he commanded you; ¹⁹ therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a

man to stand before Me always." (**Jeremiah 35:18-19 NASB**).

What a wonderful blessing for such a family! What a wonderful strength they must have given to the house of Israel!

The Scriptures give no freedom for parents to be tolerant of ungodly living and disobedience or lax in their parenting abilities in the family nor for children to be tolerant of dictatorship, insensitivity and evil guidance in the family.

We can use our influences to impact our families so that God is obeyed, Christianity is respected, the church will thrive, the church is strengthened and the world see Christ through us. One of such influences is *speaking the truth in love*.

There is a special relationship between families and the local church (**Ephesians 5:31-32**). *The family is the home church!*

A CASE OF SAUL, JONATHAN AND DAVID

CASE 1

In **1 Samuel 19**, we read about how Saul abandoned his pretence of love for David, and "went public" with his attacks against David. Jonathan (*Saul's son*) and David have a very strong bond of friendship.

Jonathan was aware of his father's evil plans to kill David. Jonathan was also aware that his father's actions were ungodly in the sight of God.

Saul's desire created a conflict of loyalties for Jonathan who needed to honor his father and king, but who also loved David (cf. 1 Samuel 18:1; 1 Samuel 18:3).

Jonathan, as an obedient and godly child, *did not tolerate his father's evil desire*. In wisdom and love, he boldly appealed to Saul logically and rationally. Jonathan's remarkable and recommended act could be broken down into the following:

- He spoke well of David to his father (*this was not flattering; it was the truth he spoke*).
- He told his father that his desire or plan was a sin, and also if implemented. (*this was not disrespectful; it was the truth he spoke*).
- He told his father that not only was the plan sinful but it would be without a cause, if implemented.
- Jonathan's act prevented murder and enhance David's safety.

⁴ Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. ⁵ For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause?" ⁶ Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." (1 Samuel 19:4-6 NASB).

What a trait for a family member like Jonathan! He wanted to build his family because he knows at the end, Israel will benefit from it.

It could be us today. It could be the children to the parents. It could be parents to children. It could be children among themselves. It could be a Christian person to another. It could be younger to elderly. It could be the elderly to the younger. The focus is that the drive for right doing should be built on genuine love, understanding of the need for peace, maturity, stability and growth.

After Saul's and Jonathan's death, David took the initiative to seek out Jonathan's son (*Mephibosheth*) adopted him as his own son, shared his bounty and fellowship with him for the rest of his life because of Jonathan, just as God has done with us for the sake of Christ.

Certain right actions that were not taken by families or by members of families have brought chaos, bitterness, hatred, malice, seeking of vengeance and *un-Christian-like character* not only into the home but into the church as well.

CASE 2

On another attempt by Saul to kill David, Saul found out that David had not come to the new moon sacrificial meal (1 Samuel 20:24-27). Saul asked Jonathan about David's whereabouts.

Saul hated David so much he could not bring himself to use his name. Saul expected Jonathan to betray David and reveal David's location to him. When that expectation did not materialize, he insulted Jonathan's mother (1 Samuel 20:30). Once again, Saul's desire created a conflict of loyalties for Jonathan.

Jonathan knew his father was rejecting and opposing God's will. Jonathan wanted God's plans to succeed. Jonathan wanted his father to stand for the unity of Israel.

Jonathan, once again, spoke the truth in love to his father. He wanted his father to realize that David has not done anything worthy of hatred, malice, and death.

³² But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" (1 Sam. 20:32 NASB).

Saul wanted his son to be an enemy to David on the ground that he hated David. Saul devalued his son and his son's admonition. He almost succeeded in killing his own son. *What a terrible character for a leader of God's people; for one who ought to have provided godly guidance to his family.*

³³ Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death (1 Samuel 20:33 NASB).

In our time, we have seen how enmity have been created among brethren because a member or members of a family have a misunderstanding with a member or members of another family.

- Judgments are formed without knowing the whole story.
- Questions are not asked to understand what led to the misunderstanding.
- Often, we only see what's above the surface; and we judge by the surface.

In the same sense, we have seen on several occasions, how some members of families become so consumed with the misconception of trying to be in competition for the best and exemplary family in the church, that anything which would reveal the opposite *is regarded as an enemy*.

REFLECTIONS OF A FAMILY THAT IS NOT BUILT UP

Most destructive traits and issues we see in the church today are reflections of what exists in our families.

The family is the home church. If our families are weak and we treat ourselves with hatred, hypocrisy, disrespect, and indifference, then the church will be weak.

An unhealthy family and its members will have difficulty pleasing and being effective for God. When the home is filled with conflict, turmoil and stress, the energy and attention of that family is turned away from God, which distracts them from effective service to God at home and in the church.

SOME PRINCIPLES IN BUILDING A FAMILY TO GOD'S GLORY

Families should learn to know God's truth, love it and speak it in love.

Families should stop living or acting as competitors to other families.

12 For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding (2 Cor. 10:12 NASB).

Families should learn to think of what their actions or traits could bring on Christ and His church.

Families should learn to have constructive and godly bonding. In such bonding, each member is given a human and right value.

There should be a specialness on each member to stimulate one to express ideas and make efforts for the family to grow in a godly and progressive way and be united. The room for constant tension and conflict and mutual competition, will be eliminated as much as possible. The home becomes a pleasant place to be and practice righteousness. *Strong families build strong churches.*

CONCLUSION

God has placed on the family or Christian home a high degree of responsibility. The local congregation cannot reach its full potential unless each member of each family within the congregation is working (productive), serving with the attitude of Christ from the home to the church.

Let's ponder on these questions:

- Are we doing our part to build up our families in a godly way?
- Do we have the right attitude toward other brethren?
- Are we speaking the truth in love?
- Are we helping to build up the church?
- Are we contributing to the unity of the church?

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