



Marriage, Family and God

The title of this tract is backwards, as is most preaching and teaching about family life today. Actually, it is more than just backwards. The title *should* be “God, and only God, in a Family.” For only as each person in a family loves God 100% can He create and maintain a true family.

The greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Mark 12:29–30

Anything less than this is idolatry. And that is exactly what has happened today—an idolatry of marriage and family. The Truth has been perverted in the name of maintaining and salvaging marriages. As the world increases in wickedness, it grabs onto anything but God. We now focus on the family so much that it causes us to take our eyes off of God and onto an idol.

Do Not Misunderstand

Do not misunderstand what is being stated here. Marriage must be honored by all and held up as holy in the Lord.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge

the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.
Hebrews 13:4

In fact, God came to turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children, and He seeks to make strong families. I can testify to the power and love the Holy Spirit works to this end, as can many others.

And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Luke 1:17

I fully believe in upholding and honoring marriage just as the writer to the Hebrews advocated. Therefore, I also preach what Scripture says about divorce—that if anyone does get a divorce, they cannot remarry. They are to be devoted to their spouse for life, and must remain single or be reconciled. This is a clear testimony to how highly we honor marriage. I hate divorce just as God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). It is this kind of purity and holy love that lies at the heart of the matter.

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Jesus seeks to gather a people ready for the Lord. That means a people who love God with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength—and, as already stated, that’s 100%. It is a total fallacy to say that we should love God first, family second, and ourselves last. That would

Marriage
& Family
God

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not be 100% love for Jesus, but only 34%. To love God “more than” family, a person need only love God with 51% of his heart. Should this person then expect to go to heaven? Certainly not! For God will not accept such half-hearted, selfish love. He does not allow any other gods before Him—or alongside Him—and that includes family. Again, anything less than a 100% love for God is pure idolatry. You can be sure that God will not grant His love to any man who thinks he can reserve part of his heart for his own idols.

“The truth and righteousness of God has been thrown out for the sake of our idolatry.”

Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold. Exodus 20:23

Jesus and Dividing Families

I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law

against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. Luke 12:49–53

These are troubling words to most churches, but life-giving to those who will love God with *all*. Jesus came to “bring fire on earth” and He greatly desired that it would be kindled. The fire Jesus discussed can result in division within households. In fact, Jesus said that any member of a person’s family could potentially become an enemy because of Him.

... a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household. Matthew 10:36

All through the history of the church we hear stories of saints who gave up children, wives, husbands, fathers and mothers because of their love for God—so none of this should surprise us. The idolatry of family, however, is so prevalent in the church today, and the truth so corrupted, that we now find such accounts shocking and distasteful. The truth and righteousness of God has been thrown out for the sake of our idolatry.

Jesus said He came to bring “division”—and he used the specific context of families to drive home His point. While all true disciples are united in Christ by the bond of love and the Holy Spirit, nowhere in Scripture do we find that this unity extends to unbelieving or hypocritical members of a believer’s family. Jesus’ own earthly family was not even exempt from this. So why should we think it will be any different for us?

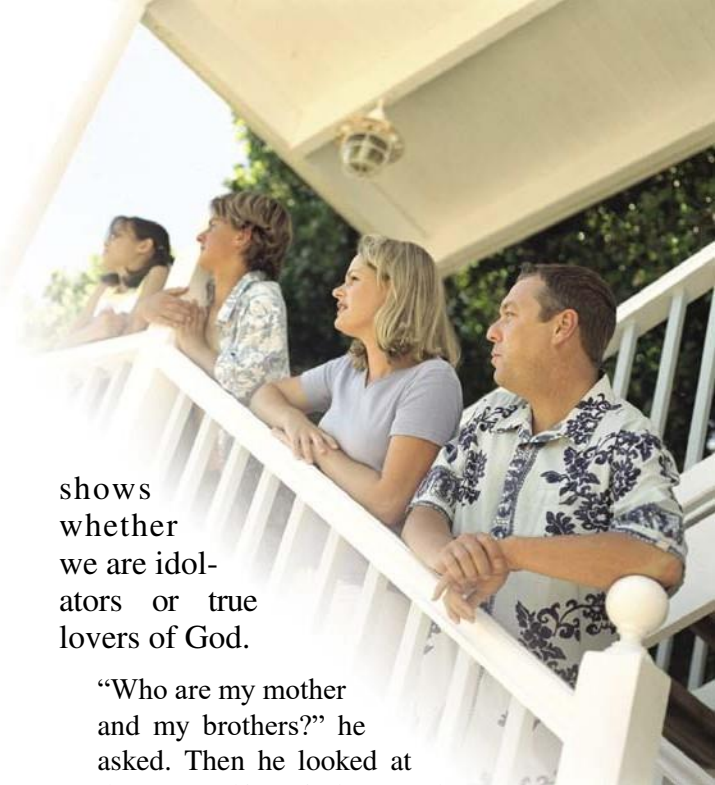
Jesus had to renounce His own mother on one occasion, and no one would argue that He acted too harsh or not in the deepest of love. We should not think that the Spirit of Jesus has somehow changed since then. Many times we must choose either God’s will or the appeasement of a family member. What we choose

shows whether we are idolators or true lovers of God.

“Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.” Mark 3:33–35

The false unity worshipped in the church today sacrifices Jesus on the altar of the idol of family. It throws God’s love into the fire and molds it into a golden calf. Most Christians would claim to want unity and salvation, but they want it without any cost. What they end up with is not Christianity at all, but a twisted set of personal idols—which demand that they sacrifice the holiness of God for the sake of a relationship with someone else.

Of course, God desires that all men come to know the Truth and to love Him. But the vast majority simply refuse to repent of their idolatry in order to devote 100% of their love to God. Indeed, most people claiming to be Christians today are not really disciples of



Jesus at all. They don't have the slightest clue how to hate their lives and carry their cross, as Jesus demands.

As they share the heart of God, every true Christian obviously desires that the other members of their family will also come to love God as they do—with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength. In fact, I would love to see the following story repeated time and time again by the power of the Holy Spirit. What joy there is in a whole family coming to truly believe in God.

The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family. Acts 16:34

Living In Peace

Unfortunately, many people will not tolerate others loving God and refuse to live in peace with them. Sometimes this friction spills over into separation and therefore Paul wrote the following Scriptures:

To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances;

God has called us to live in peace.
1 Corinthians 7:12-15

Of course, in today's religious climate, someone who claims to be a Christian and attends church can actually be an "unbeliever." When Paul speaks of "believers," he means true disciples of Jesus not hypocrites.

A true disciple of Jesus will certainly do ev-

"No one is permitted to love anything or anyone more than God."

everything within his or her power to be at peace with every member of their family. We are called to pursue and work toward this peace as the Holy Spirit leads. For, in addition to the following Scripture, Jesus also said, "Blessed are the peacemakers for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We must keep in our hearts that true peace can only be achieved by accepting God's righteousness in every situation.

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14

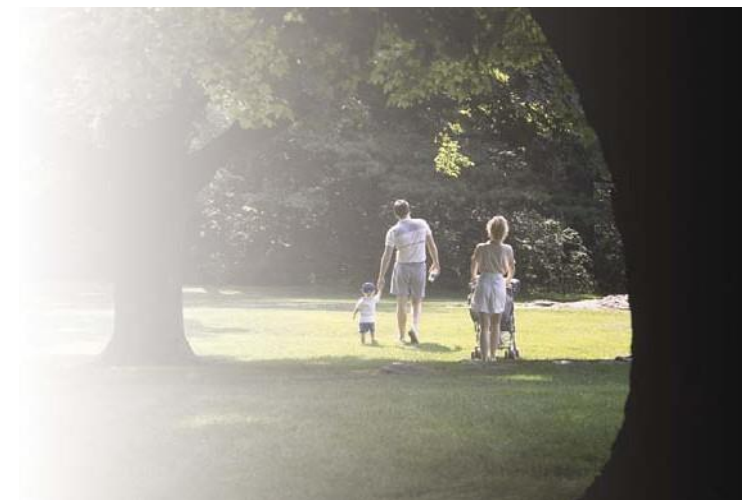
Obviously, however, this does not allow us to compromise our love and commitment to God, or tolerate idolatry, in any way. Parting of the ways only occurs because the unbeliever or hypocritical Christian simply will not love. The true disciple of Jesus makes "every effort" to live in peace—but there comes a point when to compromise further would be to deny God.

Since those hostile to the Truth hate the light of God, they argue, slander, debate, stonewall, yell, fight, and sin against those who only seek to love them by God's power. It is no different from the persecution Christians around the world receive from hostile governments and other religions. This persecution by the enemies of Jesus often forces a separation. For this reason Paul wrote the directions we just read.

No Compromise

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:37-39

No one is permitted to love anything or anyone more than God. Often, however, those who hate God will push things to the point where it becomes "either God or me." It may not be worded exactly this way, but they force the confrontation while blaming the Christian for the division.



For example, it may be beneficial for a believer to get away for a few days alone to seek God and His will without the pressures and temptations of family around. Unfortunately unbelievers and hypocrites twist this simple act of praying privately until it becomes some kind of conspiracy to divide families. Once

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again, this underscores how families have been made into an idol for so many.

As usual, it all comes down to the offensive message of the cross. Those who lose their lives for Jesus, pick up their crosses, hate their own lives in this world (John 12:25), and worship only God, may find themselves at odds with family members. It will come down to a choice—either compromise your love for God in order to keep a false and sinful peace based on a lie, or maintain your love for God and Truth at any cost. Those who bow down to the demands of others commit idolatry, in direct contradiction to Scripture.

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.
1 John 5:21

It is always astonishing to see these tragic situations develop when there is absolutely no need for it. The one unbelieving spouse (or family member) refuses to compromise on anything, while demanding that the true believer compromise on everything. This the

true believer can never do, for that would be to sin against God by becoming an idolator. God will cast out all idolators, even those who idolize their family, into the darkness and hell.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. Revelation 22:14-15

Prayer

It is every true believer's sincere prayer that every member of a family come to love God. Indeed, every disciple of Jesus Christ also prays that all men would be saved and that all families would glorify God by the “knowledge of the truth.”

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2:3-4

But no man, woman, child, relative, or friend should ever cause that Truth to be compromised. No true believer in Jesus Christ can ever allow that to happen. To do so demonstrates that they are not worthy of Jesus Christ. They may preserve their life and their family in this world, but they will ultimately perish as an idolator.

Gain More

Let us end this tract with the joy found in Jesus Christ. Those willing to love God and surrender all, no matter what the cost, will be filled with a joy that surpasses all the pain

and suffering. As Jesus said, those who give up 100% for God gain 100 times as much in return.

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. Mark 10:29-30

No doubt those who oppose Jesus Christ will seek to destroy your peace and happiness; but those who persevere to the end overflow with the joy and happiness of heaven itself. In short, it is never worth trading a relationship with the living God for any human being. The “inexpressable and glorious joy” of God cannot compare to any idol of man. After all, only God can really make a strong and true family.

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:8–9

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