

THE FAMILY OF CHRIST

David Halbrook

Several recent articles focused on relationships of the home. Hebrews 3:6 says Jesus is head of His home (house, family). Who is His family?

His family is made of every individual who learns and obeys the gospel, and thus accepts God's offer to remove his sins by Jesus' blood (Rom. 10:16; Eph. 1:7). This family began in Acts 2 when the gospel began to go into all the world (Mark 16:15). Those who gladly received this message became the family of Jesus, were taught God's teachings by the apostles, and all practiced the same things (Acts 2:41-42). This was repeated as the gospel spread into all the world. God never gave different teachings or different practices to the family of Christ.

Re-read this article and everywhere you see the word "family" replace it with the word "church" (1 Tim. 3:15). Then apply that today. Was that family part Lutheran, part Methodist, part Catholic, and part Baptist? No, so why do men view the church that way today? Thursdays at 1:00PM, a small class has begun studying the common question "Where did all the churches come from?" Your presence and participation is welcomed.

-- *Editor's Note:* If you have given any *Arkansas Weekly* articles to anyone in the month of May, this week's article might help them to better understand God's spiritual family. Also, meet and welcome John and Stacy Gentry and their children Sarah, Jacob, and Julianna. They have recently moved to Moldova (in Europe) and are home working through immigration details (read 3 Jn. 5-8). We helped with their moving expenses earlier this year. This evening, he will give a report of this work.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

Church of Christ—Quail Valley
4104 E. Harrison St.
Batesville, AR 72501
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelists:
David Halbrook 569-4491
Lenoard Westbrook 612-8409

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

May 27, 2012

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"HOW CAN I MAKE THIS CHURCH STRONG?"

Jarrod Jacobs

Strength, whether physical or spiritual, is something that we all need. New parents want to make sure that their baby grows and develops physically, don't they? If it does not gain strength in the coming weeks and months, that child will go to every doctor and specialist around until he gets better, or a reason for the lack of growth and development is discovered!

In like manner, the local church here needs to gain and retain spiritual strength. This is something God demands (I Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:10; II Tim. 2:1; II Pet. 3:18).

Knowing this is true, many concerned Christians say, "I wish this church was stronger or growing more than it is." This is a great attitude to have, but it takes ACTION if we are to grow in the Lord. What can **I** do to make this church strong?

Be Converted To God's Ways.

Once one is baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), he must completely give up his old ways. Romans 6:3-6 says we must die to the old man of sin (Also Col. 3:5-14). After this, we become a "*new creature*" in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). In fact, Jesus said we must be as a child if we wish to see Heaven (Matt. 18:3).

In applying these principles, one who will make this church strong is one that will not turn back to his old ways in sin, but will leave that old man "in the grave." As a child of God, he must have the child-like qualities of humility and obedience to God (I Pet. 5:5-6; Jn. 14:15, 23). He/She must sincerely and completely turn to God (Rom. 12:1-2). Does this describe YOU? If not, it is time to "*repent and do the works you did at first*" (Rev. 2:5)!

Be Faithful To God's Ways.

Unfaithfulness is to this church what termites are to a house!! Jesus promises to take care of our physical worries when we “*seek ... first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*” (Matt. 6:33; Ps. 37:25). John stressed the importance of being righteous when he told those in Smyrna, “*be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life*” (Rev. 2:10). The apostle Paul wrote, “*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain*” (I Cor. 15:58). If this church is to grow and be strong, it needs YOU to be faithful in your attendance, in your speech, in your thoughts, and in all you do (Col. 3:17)! Yes, it is a tall order, but it MUST be done!

Be Educated In God's Ways.

In Old Testament days, God's people experienced a great famine. It was worse than a shortage of food or water. It was a famine of God's word (Hos. 4:6; Amos 8:11-12)!! In like manner, we have a similar famine, or shortage of God's word.

Unfortunately, our problem is not from a lack of spiritual food available to us, as in other countries. Rather, this famine is the result of a REFUSAL TO EAT (I Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14)!!! As a society, we are refusing to listen to God's word and let it settle in our hearts.

Paul said that only through reading (the Bible) could we hope to have his understanding (Eph. 3:4). He later told Timothy (and us) to “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (II Tim. 2:15). Peter commanded that God's people “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (II Pet. 3:18). How can this happen when we do not know what the Bible says? How can we ever hope to strengthen the church here when we have no earthly idea what we are doing or how to do it? Thus, the need for education and for application of what we have learned!

Be A Worker In God's Ways.

We do many things that amount to nothing in this life; but working for God is something that is never in vain (I Cor. 15:58)! God said that His word will not return to Him void (Isa. 55:11). Thus, each and every thing we can do to increase our strength and the strength of our fellow Christians is a useful thing. We sometimes sing, “*I Want To Be A Worker For The Lord*” (Hymns For Worship, #504). Do we mean the words we are singing? Are we ALL chipping in and doing our part? I hope so — the strength of the Lord's church in this place depends upon it!!! Do you truly want to help? Are you willing to do what it takes to make this church strong? I am!!

DO IT BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO

Gary Henry

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (**1 Corinthians 9:27**).

It's healthy to do something every day that we really don't want to do – just for the exercise. There is a great benefit in practicing the art of self-discipline, that is, engaging in it regularly just for the sake of building our mental muscles. When Paul said that he “disciplined” his body and brought it into “subjection,” he spoke of something that requires a bit of unpleasantness from time to time. By its very nature, training requires us to get out of our comfort zone. If we never call upon our “muscles” to do anything more than what they want to do, then we never gain the ability to do anything more than that. It's just that simple. And so we ought to look for opportunities to do things that we don't want to do. It's one good way that we grow.

Have you ever watched someone “exercising”? Many of the bodily movements by which strength and agility are developed would be ridiculous if we did them for any reason other than training or exercise. Take sit-ups, for example. There is only one reason to do sit-ups: *to make your abdominal muscles do things they don't want to do.* No one would ever do it for any other reason except . . . training . . . practice . . . exercise . . . discipline. When you do sit-ups, you're demonstrating that you grasp one of life's great principles: *There is value in doing things that don't want to be done.*

Nothing is more valuable than to have our faculties — mental and spiritual, as well as physical — trained and ready to respond to important needs. But having faculties that will respond to important needs is not something that happens overnight or without any effort. When the big tests of life come along, we won't be ready for them if we haven't been training for them before then. So today, if there's some unpleasant little duty that could easily be procrastinated, do it just because you don't want to. Take that little opportunity to put the flesh in its place. Teach your body to take orders from your spirit. Someday, you'll be mighty glad you did.