

CHURCH DISCIPLINE WITHIN THE PHYSICAL FAMILY

By Keith Greer

In the previous article we discussed the need for the church to practice discipline of those walking "disorderly". The scriptures are clear concerning our duty towards the unfaithful member.

What if the member of the church is also a member of my physical family? What seemed so clear a few moments ago gets a little foggy now. Or does it?

Let me begin by clarifying some misconceptions. What if this situation is between husband and wife? Parents and children still living under the same roof? In these situations God has given us duties we must perform within the relationship. Please read Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Ephesians 6:1-4. Example: Does the husband and wife now eat alone? Do children eat their meals in another room?

Can I use one of God's commands to get around another one? Of course not! Remember the Pharisees, Matthew 15:4-7. Sound judgment and reasoning must be exercised. I'm not saying to do the absurd and neither is God. Husbands and wives have duties in a marriage. Parents, with children still under their oversight, have duties placed upon them by God. All of these must be kept.

Now, let us take it one step further and closer to home. What if the situation is that the children are away from home and have their own families? In either case, with parents or children, brothers or sisters, does the situation now change?

Please notice a couple of passages of scripture:

"But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; not even to eat with such a person." {1 Corinthians 5:11}

"And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed" {2 Thessalonians 3: 14}

In both of these passages, who does "anyone" apply to? Be careful what answer you give.

Let me use myself as an example. My father was withdrawn from in 1974. He left the church and to this day has not made his life right before God. I'm his oldest son. Do the passages just quoted apply to me? If not, why not?

Some have told me that my physical relationship came before my spiritual one. While this is true, does that change what the passages say?

"For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. "{Matthew 10:35-37} This one also applies to me!

Does my relationship with my father have to change? Yes! To be honest I did not always take this approach. A member of the church asked me to produce a passage that makes my situation different and I couldn't find it!

Some have accused me of not loving my father. What is more important to me, a relationship or his soul? He has shut himself out from the church he cannot do that with me. I'm the last line of hope to get Him back to God! I'm going to keep reminding him to get back to God! ***