

God's Instructions for Those Who Live with Unsaved Family

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. One of the questions I am frequently asked is "What can I do about my family members that are still lost?"
 - 1. We love them dearly; we want them in heaven with us; we think and pray about them often; and, we do this often to the exclusion of other opportunities to reach others who are lost.
 - 2. "Brother Paul, can you talk to them?"
- B. There is no formula of words or persuasive argument that will suddenly change their minds.
 - 1. If they come to the faith, it will be by the same means as all others.
- C. However, do not despair. There are a number of things you can do to open the door of opportunity for them, and keep it open until they leave this world.
 - 1. These things will take time, but they are the most effective means we have at our disposal.

I. WORK YOUR INFLUENCE

- A. Influence is important for Christians in their every relationship - Luke 14:34-35
 - 1. The value of a good influence - Ecc. 7:1; Prov. 22:1; Isa. 38:19; Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:14-15
- B. What happens when we neglect or compromise our influence?
 - 1. It is good for nothing - Luke 14:34-35
 - 2. Our enemies are justified - 1Peter 3:15-16
 - 3. God is blasphemed - 1Tim. 6:1
 - 4. Souls are not won for Christ - 1Peter 3:1-2
 - 5. We increase the probability that our families will not obey the Gospel and will likely choose to continue in sin and/or religious error.
- C. We must purposefully develop and protect our influence.

II. BE MORALLY CONSISTENT

- A. In your daily example - Ecc. 10:1
 - 1. The world is always trying to catch believers in inconsistencies. They believe it invalidates their message - Matt. 23:3
 - 2. Our families in their hearts want to see consistency in us; inconsistency voids their trust in their kinfolk.
- B. In the way you interact with people outside of the family - Rom. 2:3
 - 1. Never apply one standard of judgment to your family and friends, and another to strangers or enemies - James 2:1-4, 12
 - 2. Judgmentalism breeds more judgmentalism, and it is often turned against the ones who perpetrate it.
 - 3. They know that one day they might be on the wrong side of an issue with you and will remember how you act toward those with whom you are upset - Rom. 2:17-23

III. BE MATERIALLY DEPENDABLE

A. Reliable - "consistently good in quality or performance; able to be trusted."
(Merriam-Webster)

1. "How to raise a child to be a burden to others: Don't be dependable. When given a job leave it undone. Don't listen or pay attention to instructions. Never ask a question if you don't understand. Don't be responsible. Never do your duty consistently; never volunteer and never go beyond what is the minimum requirement. Don't be trustworthy. Don't do what you say you will do. Never get in a hurry or concerned about be sidetracked. Forget a lot. Constantly change jobs with large gaps of unemployment in between; blame others for your unreliability." (Dr. Thomas Warek, Traits of Successful Christian Parenting)

2. How do kinfolk respond to Christians that are unreliable?

- a. They don't trust them.
- b. They don't listen to them.
- c. They don't ask them to do a job.
- d. They don't give them responsibility.
- e. They do not depend on what they say.
- f. They are not influenced by them.
- g. They must look for reliability and a good work ethic elsewhere.

3. Our families need to feel secure. That means that we must work hard to supply our own needs and are there when others are in need.

- a. 2Kings 18:21; Prov. 25:19

IV. BE KNOWN FOR FRIENDLINESS

A. Approachable, pleasant, responsive - Luke 11:5-8; Prov. 18:24

1. A quick way to lose influence with family is to be unfriendly toward others - Rom. 12:20-21

2. I am unfriendly when I don't care - Gal. 6:2; Job 6:14-15, 19:13-14; Psalm 35:13-16

3. I am unfriendly when I don't offer help - Ex. 23:4-5

4. I am unfriendly when I reveal secrets - Prov. 11:13, 17:9

5. I am unfriendly when I forsake my friends in trouble - Prov. 17:17, 27:10

6. I am unfriendly when I selfishly make myself a burden to others

- a. Prov. 25:17, 27:14

7. Relatives notice this; foolish Christians think their families are oblivious.

- a. Prov. 27:17, 19

V. BE EVEN TEMPERED

A. The Bible warns against being quick tempered or spending time with those who are - Ecc. 7:9; Prov. 22:24-25, 14:17, 29

1. "My life is in the hands of any fool who makes me lose my temper."
(Joseph Hunter)

2. Those who lose their tempers lose their ability to influence their children and others for good - Prov. 25:28, 16:32, 19:19, 29:22; James 1:20

3. No one wants to be around an angry man - Prov. 27:3, 15:18

4. The angry man forces those nearest to him into turmoil, and everything he does ends in ruins - Prov. 30:33

VI. BE CAREFUL IN WORD

- A. The mouth can quickly get one into trouble and ruin his influence
 1. Ecc. 9:17, 5:3; Prov. 10:19, 18:6-7; Job 13:5
 2. Boasters - Prov. 27:2
 3. Whiners - Jude 16
- B. To be viewed as wise by your family and to exercise a righteous influence:
 1. Let your words be few - Prov. 10:20
 2. Let your words be well chosen - Prov. 15:28
 3. Let your words be well spoken - Col. 4:6

VII. LIST OF BEHAVIORS OF CHRISTIANS WHO SUCCESSFULLY INFLUENCED THEIR FAMILIES FOR THE LORD, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER:

- A. The absence of profanity at home and all other places - Eph. 4:29
- B. A visible warm love between family members - Eph. 5:29
- C. A love for the brethren and sacrificing time to help them - 1Peter 2:17
- D. Only morally upright forms of entertainment at all times - James 1:22
- E. Having an active prayer life
- F. Extending hospitality - Rom. 12:13
- G. Faithful in worshiping with other Christians; refuses to use cop out excuses to stay home - Heb. 10:24
- H. Involved in saving the lost and other works of the local church
- I. Rejoicing in the fact that you are a Christian - Phil. 4:4
- J. Make the effort to get your family to get together and activities that involve other Christians.
- K. Invite family to Gospel meetings and help organize transportation for them; attend the meeting faithfully.
- L. Limit the amount of time between contacts with them.
- M. Have regular and deep spiritual conversations with them - Deut. 6:7
- N. Do not turn your head when you see your family walking the wrong path.
- O. Make it clear by word and example that God's laws take precedence over your own opinions.
- P. Make it clear that your family takes precedence over your career, but not over your service to the Lord.
- Q. Worship and Bible study takes precedence over ALL sports, hobbies, school activities, homework, and household chores.
- R. Honoring God and obeying His word takes precedence over everything else - John 14:15
- S. Have fellowship and strong relationships with faithful Christians.
- T. Talk about your faith frequently.
- U. Show them that convictions take precedence over convenience.
- V. Make it a priority to find and work with an energetic, growing congregation. Do not choose a congregation because of convenience or short services.

- W. Remember the impact of your choice of career or residence on your family.
Remember what living in Sodom did to Lot's family
- X. Don't sacrifice your eternal future for short term interests.
- Y. Adults in the family need to be equally strong morally and spiritually.
- Z. Love your family openly and honorably - 1Cor. 13:4-7
- AA. Discipline yourself and your children - Prov. 22:15
 - 1. He said the rod of corrections, not the pat of disappointment, or the verbal shouting match, or the insipid time out - Prov. 23:13
- BB. As much as is possible and reasonable, protect them from the influence of the world - 1Cor. 15:33

Conclusion:

- A. We don't develop courage by being happy every day. We develop it by surviving difficult times and challenging adversity. Anyone can give up, it's the easiest thing in the world to do. But to hold it together when everyone else would understand if you fell apart, that's true strength. (Barbara De Angelis)