

# The Family Unit

## **A New Year Brings Hope**

The Christian family can look to the future with hope even in this time of increasing spiritual darkness. Faith in the gospel has sustained the family in the passing year and will do so in the new year. The dawn of a new year offers a time of reflection on the events and experiences of the past year and the promises of hope for the new. A new beginning in both temporal and spiritual life is possible.

What promises can family members make for the new year? What changes would be beneficial for the faith and temporal life of the family? Stepping back and taking the landscape view one can first ask, “What has God intended for Christian family life?” Further, what does the Bible say? What do the experiences of life reveal?

## **In What Ways Can the Family Unit Be Strengthened?**

Spending time together strengthens the bond of the family unit. Engaging all family members as equals and listening to the opinions of others is a good start for building unity. Maintaining a healthy atmosphere where there is freedom to speak even of the wounds and defeats is also important. This atmosphere is best created and cared for with God’s Word and the spirit of the gospel.

In this, parents can have a major influence. Also important is that parents must pull in the same direction as guided by the Holy Spirit. Children can detect if parents are not of one mind and will soon learn which parent will “give in.”

A special challenge for maintaining a healthy atmosphere exists if the family includes a member living at home who is not in faith. In fear of losing other children to unbelief a danger exists of becoming too tight or too lenient. The rules set up for the operation of the Christian home should not be changed to accommodate the one who has left faith.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation. Children learn a lot by example and experience. Learning how to care for matters with the gospel is usually first learned at home. Caring for them as wide as they have affected applies in the home also. The personal faith and care of the conscience by parents and children are fundamental for harmony and peace.

Making it important to get to the services and other activities of God’s children sets a good example for children as to what really is important in life. Children and parents can both help nurture the home setting by supporting one another with forgiveness, kindness, meekness, and respect. Saying the words “I love you” or expressing appreciation for another’s help or faithfulness to their home duties strengthens the family bond.

## **Marriage and Family Is under Attack**

The Christian understanding of marriage and family is under attack. A powerful spirit of delusion, atheism, has entered the world and demands a different definition of both marriage and family. In the name of human rights and freedom, the atheist “exalteth himself above all that is called God” (2 Thess. 2:4). Marriage was established by the Creator himself and is holy in His sight. Being witnesses to the attacks on marriage and family brings distress and sorrow to our hearts. We live in a time when there is a general falling away of the heart of man from God. This time was prophesied of by Paul as the coming revelation of the “man of sin...the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3).

Demands to redefine marriage come from the gay and lesbian communities and their supporters. A downward spiral starting from the rejection of God as the Creator and no longer being thankful to Him, have caused gays and lesbians to become slaves of their own lusts (Rom. 1:18–32).

We live in a time when morals are decided by vote, courts, and public opinion polls instead of God’s Word. It is the time of moral relativism. Atheism is insistent in its effort to remove God from all aspects of our lives. The God-intended purpose for family will be lost if family can no longer be ideally defined in terms of father, mother, parents, sons, daughters, or grandparents.

## **The Joy of Salvation**

The spiritual darkness of this world weighs heavy on our hearts. We must not, however, let it diminish the joy of salvation we have or the joy we experience in the Christian home. We have much to be thankful for. We can counter spiritual darkness by gathering more often in the light of God’s Word and in the name of Jesus. The Christian home is an excellent setting for such gathering.

Using the Bible, the *Voice of Zion* and other Christian publications, or general discussion, parents and children can verify what God’s Word teaches on the various issues we face in our time. Reinforcing the “ABCs” or fundamentals of what we believe, and why, helps establish the home and prepare our children to battle against darkness.

Religious training begins in the home and is supported by God’s kingdom. Parents need to take responsibility for it. It is not a task left only for the congregation. The congregation will “water that seed that has been planted,” however. Luther reflects that God has placed a child into our laps as a living soul to be nurtured. This insight focuses for us what really is important in our day-to-day efforts.

As we begin this new year, as individuals and families, let us renew the promise to keep faith and a good conscience. Let us ask for guidance and heavenly wisdom in the rearing of our children and the spiritual edification of families.

Walt Lampi

**Discussion Questions:**

- What can you do in your family to improve freedom to discuss joys and sorrows?
- When gathered as a family, take turns sharing a favorite portion of Scripture or a favorite song. Discuss why it is special to you.
- How is the home atmosphere affected if one family member has given up faith?

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