

The Household Of God And Truth

Importance of the Family

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In secular thought, at least from Plato on, home or households have been seen as a private element that is distinct from public or political elements. The home has been designated by humanity to be the domain of women and children rather than the men. Societies for millennia have thought of households in that way—of not being a home for men.

Throughout history and especially today it has been degraded and seen as unimportant. This society has been on a campaign to further reduce the focus on home life—replacing it with the "global village" catch phrase we are all familiar with. (I think it was made popular by Hilary Clinton).

Throughout much of man's history and especially today a "stay-at-home" person is thought of as a weakling, a "homebody," an unadventurous person, someone who does not have an imagination. The kitchen sink and the hot stove have been targets of feminist anger, increasing the pressure on all households to disintegrate. So there is a very definite working to disintegrate the households as quickly as possible, and we know who is behind that.

To these negative views of home, we have to add the influence of modern transport and general mobility, which is creating a rootless society. Many people live out of suitcases in hotel rooms and do not know where home is because they are on the road more than they are at (what they call) their house or their home. Mix in wars, which have made millions homeless, and we have a cocktail of homelessness and rootlessness that threatens to shatter society altogether.

It is not surprising that fundamentalist nationalism is on the increase. Ethnic groups are demanding a return to their roots and a defense of their land. Human beings need homes—somewhere they know they belong. To destroy the concept of home is to destroy humanity itself.

Turn with me to II Timothy. Likewise, if it were possible to destroy the concept of the household of God, it would be possible to destroy the church itself. There are forces at work that are bent on destroying family "type" relationships within the church. Satan knows that to destroy relationships between family members and brethren works to disintegrate the Church itself. So he uses this as a main ploy and a main wile.

Many warnings about these attacks are found in the Pastoral Epistles of Paul which we are going to look at here in II Timothy 3, reading verses 1-9.

II Timothy 3:1-9 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! [It is a shame but that is a description of the modern household.] For of this sort are those who creep into households [speaking there of households within the church of God] and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

God will expose these infiltrators but not before they have had time to take people away from God's church. We have seen that already. And it will continue until Christ's return. The biblical images of home and house—what we think of as a household—tend to emphasize security, appropriateness, and truth, although households here in verse 6 are those that have not guarded the truth. In those first five verses, those are households who had not an ounce of truth within them.

Three words are usually found in the Bible where the family or the household is indicated. These three are the Hebrew word "bayith" and the Greek words "oikia" and "oikos." These are the most common words used in

the Hebrew and Greek for house or household. The unit of the national life of Israel, from the very beginning, was found in the family.

The Hebrew and Greek words often have the sense of "household," and this term is frequently substituted in various Bible versions for the word "house" of the King James Version. So when you read the word "house" in the King James Version, many times it is referring to household.

In the old patriarchal days each family was complete within itself, the oldest living sire being the unquestioned head of the whole, he possessed almost arbitrary powers—complete control. The house and the household are practically synonymous in Scripture.

God had called Abraham "that he might command his children and household after him."

House meaning "household," appears first in Genesis 18:19 and often thereafter. In the OT it usually means the whole of the domestic staff as well as the family. It is used to mean "dynasty," as in the "house of David."

In the biblical usage, households could include husbands, wives, concubines, children, close relatives, slaves, and even strangers. For example:

- Noah's household consisted not only of himself and his wife, but also of his three sons and their wives.
- In Genesis 14:14, it says that 318 trained men, or servants, who had been born into Abraham's household, rescued Lot. Later Abraham was commanded to put the sign of the covenant on all the male members of his household. Genesis 17 explains this, "every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house, or bought with your money from a foreigner who is not your offspring." That is what it refers to there as Abraham's household.
- The house or household of Jacob included all his offspring—his unmarried daughters, his sons, their wives, and his sons' sons and daughters—70 in all were considered Jacob's household.

But the household, the family, or the house (whichever term you want to use) of the Old Testament should not be thought of as being very large. It should

not be identified as equal with a clan, which is a subdivision of a tribe; rather, it is a subdivision of a clan. A household is considered to be a very small element, not a large one.

The Scriptures are much more corporate minded than we are today, and the Old Testament use of "household" reflects that difference. God does not deal with each person He calls in a merely autonomous fashion throughout Scripture, but quite often He deals with whole households.

To express the importance of the household as a unit in God's working with human beings, I am going to breeze through several scriptures just to show you how the Bible uses the term household. Turn with me to Genesis 18.

Once Abraham was called, then his whole household was considered to be in the covenant and the males were required to receive the covenant sign—which was circumcision. God gave a charge of holiness not only to Abraham, but also to his whole household. Here in Genesis 18, we will read verses 17-19.

Genesis 18:17-19 And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they [the whole household] keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

God commanded various religious requirements to be observed by the household as a unit: the Passover, the sin offering on the Day of Atonement, the sacrifice of the firstborn of the flocks, and tithing were commanded to households to be kept.

On the negative side, God punished not only Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, but also their entire households. What the leader of the household does affects his entire family, his entire household.

When he punished Achan for his sin, he also punished his household—"his sons and daughters, and his oxen and asses and sheep, and his tent, and all that he had" were destroyed or punished because of Achan's sin.

Conversely, when God blessed Obed-edom for taking care of the ark, He also blessed "all his household."

When Joshua saved Rahab for her act of faithfulness, he also saved her father's household and all who belonged to her. So does the head of the household have any impact on the future of a family or their household? It certainly does. It is an awesome responsibility that the head of the household has.

On the human level, Jacob treated his whole household as a religious unit, commanding them to put away their foreign gods and to accompany him to Bethel, where he would set up an altar.

When Jacob was in danger of famine, Joseph invited him and his whole household to Egypt.

The children in the Old Testament are the bearers of the sins of the fathers. Human life is not a conglomerate of individuals; the family is its center and unit. For example, David's household shared his humiliation.

There is no doubt that the Bible treats households as a unit and the head of the household's actions impact his entire household. So many of the times we have seen blessings or cursings brought upon individuals in the Bible, it has been upon their entire household.

Turn with me to Matthew 10. It was no different in the New Testament. The curse and the blessing of the apostles abided on a house according to the attitude of that house.

Matthew 10:5-15 These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of

heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house [or that household] or city, shake off the dust from your feet. . .

It does not say that when the leader of the household does not accept you, or the truth, or when individuals in it do not, it says the *entire* household. There tends to be, within a household, general and similar attitudes. Generally speaking, it is set and affected by the head of the household.

A divided house falls. So closely are the members of a household related that Jesus observed that if its master is called Beelzebul, how much more its members. Continuing in Matthew 10:24-25

Matthew 10:24-25 A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!

. . .because the head of the household represents the entire household. The household believes with the head. When Jesus healed the son of a royal official, not only did the official believe, but so did all his household.

In the book of Acts we read that households were saved and baptized along with their heads: the household of Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailer, as well as Crispus.

Paul tells of baptizing the household of Stephanus. He prayed that God would show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, and he sent his greetings to them. These were physical households—family units. The

household of God is likewise a family unit. It is likewise affected by its leaders—just as a physical household is.

The theme of the household of God builds on the type of the house as a place of meeting and fellowship. Paul expresses this in his letter to Philemon.

Turn with me to Philemon. We will take a look at a little bit here how the church many times met in a house, and the significance and the importance of it.

Philemon 1:1-2 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

Obviously, this was not a church building as this world looks at, but it was actually the household of God meeting in a house there, in a household.

The breaking of bread, preaching and teaching were conducted from house to house. The private house was, in a sense, the house of God in being a place of worship in the early church *if* the household was part of God's church. We see more and more of this today in God's church as brethren become more and more scattered.

The households were the physical nuclei for the life of the church. No wonder that the early church so emphasized family life. And in the midst of all our modern, rampant individualism, the family is still the throbbing heart of the church and must be for any unified church or nation. Without a unified household, you cannot have a unified nation.

Regarding the centrality of the Family, or the centrality of the household, United States President Ronald Reagan made this proclamation on November 21, 1986 during National Family Week:

Family life and the life of freedom are interdependent. In the arena of the family, children learn the most important lessons they will ever receive about their inherent dignity as individuals. They learn as well about the social and religious traditions that unite

generation to generation, and they begin to acquire the values for which their ancestors sacrificed so much for freedom.

The centrality of the family is acknowledged even by those forces that would weaken or destroy it. Totalitarian societies see in the family a natural enemy, a bulwark of basic loyalist and inherited ideals that place allegiance in relationships that precede the claims of the state. Corrosive influences sure as illegal drugs and pornography seek to substitute for the permanent bonds of family life a transient and ultimately false sense of happiness and fulfillment. Against these forces the family can often seem helpless and ineffective, but experience shows that it is in being tested that the strength of the family finally reveals itself. After all, the family has been with us from the dawn of human history, and there is no reason to believe that it will not endure.

It is just amazing what worldly people can see to be truth having to do with such permanent fixtures that God has placed here on this earth, such as the family as households.

Turn with me to Ephesians 2. Scripture refers to the entire church as the household of God. Christians, in the plural, form the household of God—God's Family on earth. And as the strength of individual families are, so goes the strength of the church.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

You will notice in verse 20 that Jesus is the Word of God and the Word of God is truth and truth is the cornerstone of the household of God.

Turn with me to Hebrews 3. The church is both God's home on earth and our home as members of His household.

Hebrews 3:1-6 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house [or household]. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

We see there a qualification of each one of us, even each household, has to be part of that household of God.

Jesus is contrasted with Moses as a Son over God's house. Moses was no more than a member— of the house. He was essentially one with all others. Christ has an innate superiority. He is the Son and as such is "over" the household.

The spiritual or symbolic sense of household shows us united by God's election and salvation through Jesus Christ, therefore, we are included in God's household of faith mentioned in Galatians 6:10.

The spiritual household is first of all a relational image, a large and extended family including various associates and household servants known affectionately as "brothers and sisters," or in general "brethren."

But closely related is the architectural imagery of the church as "pillar" and "foundation of the truth." In contrast to the pagan temples and even the stone Temple in Jerusalem, we are a spiritual house, built by Jesus Christ with living stones. In this house of God is the pillar of the truth.

Turn with me to I Timothy 3. The description here brings to mind a building under construction, such as a temple, rising up from the ground, with the foundation and weight-bearing pillars built of the most reliable and enduring

material to be found: TRUTH! This truth is "the word of God," Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone of the household of God.

I Timothy 3:14-15 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

According to *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, the phrase "the house of God" is more adequately translated "God's household."

God's church is the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church supports the truth. But, also truth is part of the foundation of the church. The idea of "pillar" is that of support—further strengthened by the "ground," a foundation or mainstay. Taken together, these two terms emphasize the certainty and firmness of the truth that is revealed in God's Word to the household of God.

In the Pastoral Epistles of Paul—the books to Timothy and Titus—the image of the church as the "assembly of the living God" takes second place to the image of the "household of God." It is not speaking primarily of the assembly, but of the spiritual context of the household of God.

In II Timothy 2, verse 20, we find members within the church compared to household utensils of gold and silver or wood and clay; some for special or "honorable" use and others for ordinary or "dishonorable" use. The context of this metaphor is a comparison between those who are faithful to the truth and those who have turned from the truth.

II Timothy 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

This explains that those who cleanse themselves will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the house, ready for every good work.

Obviously, there is work that needs to be done by the utensils of the house. The key word there is *work*. We have to work to produce fruit.

We are going to change direction at this point in the sermon. I wanted to touch on the idea that God purposely designed households to be isolated in a limited way from the world. Please do not take this to the extreme when I talk about isolation, but try to see the principle here involved.

God designed our environment to be conducive to agriculture. He intended mankind to work more closely with His creation. This is why most people throughout history have lived on or around farms—until more recently, of course. Farm life, for thousands of years, has consisted of a certain amount of isolation, just by the nature of it—by the size of the farms and the distances the people were from each other.

Until the recent invention of high-speed travel a farming family or household would only go to town a few times each week. That is if a town was even available. Maybe some family members would go to town once or twice for supplies and maybe once a week families would go into to town to worship or to another congregation or another household to worship, but that was only once a week.

The time spent between households throughout man's history has been very limited and that is by God's design. I realize that people tend to flock toward towns, but in most cases it is not a healthy atmosphere. Contact with other households was limited, as God intended. The home was, and still should be, the primary area of activity for a family.

In my almost 40 years attending God's church, I have seen household after household begin their relationship with another household feeling closer than brothers and sisters. And, in time, becoming so irritated with each other, through too much contact, that they barely spoke to each other again—because familiarity does breed contempt, even among brethren.

No matter how much we want to love and enjoy someone else's company, if we spend too much time with them, we tend to get irritable. Except, God has designed it so that, in a family (or household), those irritations do not usually rise to the level that they do between other households.

God never intended for people of different households to spend an excessive amount of time together. He intended for members of families, of households, to spend a lot of time growing together within the family unit—within their own household. But, this is not to be done to the neglect of the needy—such as widows and orphans. There is a balance involved here.

In one sense, households were meant to be scattered. By scattered I mean that contact with other households is limited so as not to distract or interfere with our relationship with God and learning together as a family—as a household—how to live like Christ. I am not talking about being a hermit here. I am not talking about ignoring people or not fellowshiping.

Turn with me to I Timothy 5. Of course God says we are to be hospitable and fellowship. I am talking about the fact that God has designed us to work and to produce fruit more than He has created us to talk. Remember Christ said, I work and My Father works!

Paul told Timothy to warn the members not to be idle and not to gossip.

I Timothy 5:13-15 And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some have already turned aside after Satan.

Yes, this is directly talking about young widows, but the principle holds true for anyone with too much free time on their hands. This includes anyone who has time to prance from household to household—carrying idle talk and gossip. God wants all of us to work at producing good physical and spiritual fruit rather than to spend an excessive amount of time talking.

Turn with me to James 3. James warns us that the tongue is evil and if man could control it, he would be a perfect man. So, obviously, every last member of God's church has a problem with the tongue—including myself.

James 3:1-10 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

Just as the human household is a type of the church of God; so also, the limited isolation of a farm is a type of the scattered brethren. Scattered brethren only see other brethren once in a while and because of the scarcity of those moments tend to truly appreciate others in God's church. Except for email and letters, there is little opportunity to gossip and be involved in idle talk. We should look at the scattering not so much as a curse but as a blessing as well; as time for people to be able to reflect and spend time with their households truly trying to do what is right, and what God says, and to really look forward to and to enjoy those moments brethren have together when they come.

Life within the household of God carries its own tensions and subversive threats from adversaries, much of it centered on words. Some are led astray by myths and endless genealogies, speculations, profane myths, and old wives' tales which subvert the household's history and purpose. This is "what is falsely called knowledge," as we read in I Timothy 6:20.

Referring to the misuse of words Paul told Timothy: Some, like mariners who have lost their course, have "shipwrecked their faith", and others have "gone astray". Some, like branded slaves, have seared their consciences as with a hot iron and placed themselves in the service of falsehood.

There is the picture, in II Timothy 3:5, of those who are condemned as having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. Spiritual danger is all around us, and the household is to be on the lookout for deceiving spirits, the teachings of demons and the snare of the Devil by which he holds people captive to do his will. It is interesting that Paul warned Timothy and Titus that individuals would come into their households. But that household is not just a physical household, as with personal families, but it is also the household of God. We should guard against that in both places not just in our personal households.

It is my personal belief that one of the greatest deceits that threatens the church of God today is the tendency of people who attend God's church to equate Protestantism, and even Catholicism, with God's truth. Satan knows that the best deception is the one you do not see coming—one that is subtle. For so many years, as people have come into the church, they have brought Protestantism, the syrupy mainstream type of religion, with them. It has taken hold and gone through the church. We saw that happen in Worldwide.

Time after time in the history of the church of God over the last 400 years the world's perverted form of Christianity has infiltrated the church with false teachings. We have not only seen this in the Worldwide Church of God, but it is happening to other groups as well. As much as I fear about it and want the best for the United Church of God, I see more and more Protestantism going into that church all the time. So, I hope if anyone in United hears this, that they be aware that Protestantism *is* a threat to God's church. I see the influence among some member of the Church of the Great God.

Here are some signs to look for in recognizing this infiltration of Protestantism, of Catholicism, of mainstream Christianity (I am not talking here about someone who may have had comments like these at one time, but about people who as a way of life make these comments.):

- For example, the misuse of the word "love" when they actually mean emotion. People will throw the word "love" around quite often when they actually mean that they "feel" good or that they have a "feel good" type of religion.
- Another aspect of Protestantism that creeps into the church is the tolerance of sin under the illusion that it is showing "love." Sometimes we become very lenient on what is happening in God's church having to do with sin. What are we to do? We are to go to our brother if there is a problem, if we think someone has a problem with sin. We should not talk about them and gossip. We should go to our brother.
- Be aware of people who watch religious services of Sunday-keeping churches. I have heard people make comments like that in the church, that they commonly watch the Sunday services on Sunday mornings. That is beyond me. That is a way of letting this into the church of God.
- Consistent emails of syrupy and sanctimonious stories with a religious bent. If you receive one, it does not mean that person is Protestant, but you will notice a trend. Some people have bent that way. Be careful.
- Use of sanctimonious phrases such as: "There is so much love in our home." What they mean is they have an emotionally immature home. There is a lot of emotion that flows through their home, but not a lot that may be true love that God gives us as a gift.
- Statements such as: "I've grown so much this week." Why do they not just pat themselves on the back while they are saying it? Why do they not just say, "I learned a lot this week?" Because it does not sound as religious to them as "I've grown so much this week." Or they might even say about somebody else, "You've grown so much." Those making the statement have set themselves up on a pedestal. They think they are the standard of righteousness. So we cannot be presumptuous in making these statements about other people because only God knows how much a person has grown or not grown. If somebody said this, it does not mean that they are Protestant. It just means that some of these things tend to have a Protestant bent to them. And they creep into the church. I have seen it happen many many times over the last 38 years or so.

Turn with me to II Timothy 3. I am going to read this scripture again. In II Timothy we encounter a mini-daytime drama based on localized events: false teachers infiltrate households and take captive gullible or silly women.

II Timothy 3:5-7 having a form of godliness [And that is influence by mainstream Christianity, Protestantism, Catholicism. It is an illusion, a fake form of godliness.] but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The point is the character of these particular women, not of their gender. These women either lost sight of God's purpose for them or they never really subjected themselves to God's authority. It may be speaking specifically about silly or gullible women, but the principle is there for each and every one of us to apply to ourselves and not to look at others.

It is households within the church that were being targeted by false teachers. This description indicates that they get a foot in the door (so to speak) through the ploy of fellowship. But their intention is to promote their own ideas and to complain about the ministry and their families, or the ministry and their households. Beware of this type because they try to become good friends with you and your family. The term household indicates an intimate relationship. They seem like they want to be your friend. Just remember who else wants to be your friend. Satan wants to be your friend.

Jude 12-13 These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Turn with me to II Timothy 2 again. As in a physical family or household, the crux of conflict in the church is words—words that compose the Word of God and Christian teaching, and words that foster controversy and error.

In II Timothy the wording of those in error is colorfully belittled. I am not going to read scriptures, I am just going to jump to four scriptures. Notice in II Timothy 2:14, it talks about "striving or, wrangling over words." In verse

16, "profane and vain babblings, or chatter." In verse 17, you will notice there "talk that spreads like cancer or, gangrene." And then in verse 23, "stupid and senseless controversies that breed quarrels" and "foolish and ignorant disputes."

These myths and disputes about words must be opposed by healthy teaching, a diet of nourishing words, the faithful word, the word of truth that is to be rightly divided, or explained, a foundation of faithful and sound words. This has to first begin in our individual households where these problems are addressed and taken care of. Then, as they are addressed in our personal households, the impact will be a positive one on the household of God.

These illustrations of established and sound teaching suggest a standard of truth by which people, households, and communities should be organized and identified. "Sound words" organize lives of "good works." Sound words equal truth. Truth must be the foundation of any Christian household. And if truth is not the foundation, then it is not a Christian household.

In John 18 Jesus said, "I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." We are all very familiar with Pilate's response with the question, "What is truth?" Let that ring in your minds, "What is truth?"

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary says, "Truth is conformity to fact or actuality; faithfulness to an original or to a standard. It is a way of life!"

God proclaimed that He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth." Also, all of His paths are "mercy and truth." Frequently in the psalms, God's mercy and His truth are joined together. All of God's works, precepts, and judgments are done in righteousness and truth.

Truth is a moral and personal characteristic of God: Isaiah 65:16 declares that He is "the God of truth." Scripture defines what represents God's quality of truth. The psalmist in Psalm 119 declared, "Your law is truth," "all Your commandments are truth," and "the entirety of Your word is truth." Because

of His perfect nature and will, God has to speak and act in truth; He cannot lie. Anything that comes from God is truth because it is such an integral part of His personality and His character and His attributes

Jesus is the Word of God who became flesh, "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." All Jesus said was true, because He told the truth which He heard from God the Father. This is how we know to have truth in our households—by the Word of God.

He promised His disciples that He would send "the Spirit of truth," a helper that would abide in Christians forever, testify about Jesus, guide Christians into all truth, and glorify Jesus.

Turn with me to John 17. God the Father and Jesus Christ are truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus and the revelation that the Spirit of truth gave through Jesus Christ's apostles are the revelation and definition of truth about God, man, redemption, history, and the world. "The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

Truth is a representation of things as they really are. And Jesus Christ lived His life on earth so that we could understand and see truth in action. And here in John 17, a scripture you are very familiar with and already have to memory.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

To see things as they are—is to see God to be infinitely loving and pure, His commands to be reasonable and just, and His Kingdom to be holy and desirable. To see things as they are is to see that life is short, that death is near, and that the pride, pleasures, wealth, and honors of this world are of little value.

He that sees all this, or that looks on things as they really are, will desire to be holy. He will make it his great objective to live near to God and to glorify His name. The earth and the heavens, the seasons, the sunshine and the rain, are all designed to teach us His goodness and power, and lead us to Him in truth.

God's daily mercies lead us to the same goal, and afflictions have the same design. Our own sickness teaches us that we are temporary in the flesh. The death of a friend teaches us the instability of all physical life and how much we need God. All these things are designed to make accurate representations to the mind, and as a result to sanctify us by truth. We will not find an ounce of truth out there in the world—but only in God's Word and in what He gives to us as a gift of inspiration.

God's Word is all that He has spoken—that is, all that is contained in the Bible. All the commands and promises of God, His representations of His own character and that of man, His account of the mission and death of His Son, of the grave, the resurrection, judgment, and eternity—all tend to represent things as they are, thereby sanctifying those who accept His truth. We have here in John 17:17 the testimony of Jesus Christ that the revelation that God has given is true. All that God has spoken is true.

To be sanctified by God's truth we have to live it.

John 8:31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed."

How do we abide in His Word? We abide in it by living it.

John 8:31 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The phrase, "You shall know the truth. . ."

First, even those who are called are very much in the dark concerning many things that we should know. God's children are but spiritual *children*, and understand and speak as children. If we did not need to be taught, we would not be disciples. So we are all, in a sense, God's children and need teaching.

Second, it is a very great privilege to know the truth, to know the spiritual truths that we are to believe, in their mutual dependencies and connections, and to know the grounds and reasons of our belief—to know what is truth and what proves it to be so.

Third, Christ has promised to all who continue in His Word, that we shall know the truth as far as is needful and profitable for us. Therefore, Christ's disciples are sure to be well taught. Although we are well taught, we do not know everything.

Then the second phrase there in verse 32—"The truth shall make you free."

First, the truth that Christ teaches tends to make men free. Justification makes us free from the guilt of sin, by which we were bound over to the judgment of God; sanctification makes us free from the bondage of corruption, by which we were restrained from that service which is perfect freedom, and constrained to that which is perfect slavery. It makes us free from our spiritual enemies, free in the service of God, free to receive the privileges as sons.

Second, having to do with the phrase "the truth shall make you free." The knowing, entertaining, and believing of this truth makes us free (that is, the living of it makes us free), free from prejudices, mistakes, and false notions. The power of the mind is greatly improved in scope and understanding by admitting and living the truth of Christ.

The intellectuals of the world, that is, the enemies of Christianity, pretend that they are free thinkers, but in reality, that is, in truth, the freest thinkers are those guided by faith, and those who allow themselves to be brought into obedience to Christ. And through obedience to Christ and understanding of His truth, requires a lot of work on our part and a lot of work on Jesus Christ's and God the Father's part. (They are especially working hard).

Turn with me to I John 2. I want to look at two main aspects of truth, in a sense, two main categories of truth. I do not mean to pigeonhole truth, but I think this helps just to clarify two ways that truth is used in the Bible.

The first aspect of truth is logical truth. Logical truth is the correspondence of concepts with facts. It is expressive of the relation between the knower and that which is known, and depends upon the arrangement of ideas with reference to a central or composite idea. While this meaning of truth is involved in Scripture, it is not the primary meaning anywhere, save in a

practical religious application. I John 2 gives us an example of this aspect of logical truth.

I John 2:4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

I John 2:21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

The second category is moral truth. This is the correspondence of expression with inner conception. That is, the association of an active idea with fact, that requires action—the association of expression with thought and intention—the association of concrete reality with ideal type. This is the characteristic sense of the word "truth" in the Scripture. Here the aim of religion is to relate man to God in accordance with truth. We do that by living God's truth. Man is to know God and His order as they are in **fact** and in **idea**. To do the will of God is the necessary attitude for holding the truth. We have to submit ourselves to the will of God in order to be able to live a truthful life.

Turn with me to Ephesians 1. In the Bible, the known will of God is final for man as a standard of truth, not as arbitrary, but as expressive of God's nature. God's nature is all-comprehensive of fact and goodness, and so is all and in all—the source, support, and objective of all that is real. The term "truth" is often equivalent to the revealed will of God—which we will see here in Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:9-14 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him [that is the will of Him] who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be

to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

So we see there that the will of the Father and truth are so closely related that they are inseparable. Because what God wills is what will happen, and what will happen is reality—it is truth.

Whether a human household or the household of God is based on truth—there are certain beneficial characteristics that can be seen in a household. I would like to give you five of those beneficial characteristics that are seen in a household with truth.

Turn with me to I Corinthians 12. A household based on truth brings the entire household into unity. Romans 12:16 exhorts us to "be of the same mind toward one another," knowing that a house divided against itself cannot stand. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. God's will is for all His children to walk in oneness.

I Corinthians 12 talks about how we are one body. We are one household.

I Corinthians 12:12-17 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

Now relate that to each and every one of us within the church. We are all have responsibilities to fulfill and we should not try to tell someone else how to do theirs better.

I Corinthians 12:18-21 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

Each and everyone of us needs each other as brethren in the church of God, in the household of God.

I Corinthians 12:22-27 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. [No matter who we are, we have to have that same care and outgoing concern for every individual in the body of Christ.] And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

The second characteristic of a household: a household based on truth follows the pattern of Christ and His church. Ephesians 5:23 explains that husbands and wives are to live by Christ's example with the church. Headship and submission are well understood by the military, where the leaders lay out clear plans for training and battle. It is the same in a household. The leaders must actively promote and guard the truth with the members following his lead.

Ephesians 4:15-16 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

When it comes to truth the members of a household should not go off and do their own thing, especially when it comes to biblical speculation, which causes disunity. Speculation and human interpretation is not truth. It is opinion! Much rebellion has been conceived over opinion, over speculation.

Turn with me to Job 23 and we will look at the third beneficial characteristic. A household based on truth agrees to take a look at the positive and negative reasons to follow a certain course of action. Seeing the two sides of an issue can bring about a quicker resolution to important decisions which brings about the desired unity.

Job knew that if he could get an audience with his Creator, God would hear him out.

Job 23:1-7 Then Job answered and said: "Even today my complaint is bitter; my hand is listless because of my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me. Would He contend with me in His great power? No! But He would take note of me. There the upright could reason with Him, and I would be delivered forever from my Judge."

So in a family, whether it be a physical household or the spiritual family of God, we should always be willing to hear a person out when they come to us. John Charles Wynn wrote in his essay, *How Parents Face Family Problems*,

"Christian character is nurtured, not in the fleeting moments of glorious experience, but in the common activity of everyday affairs, in a continuous, often undramatic, obligation. What counts in the long run is neither the few high points nor the blundering mistakes, but the general average of training over the years. Perhaps those daily times of worship have seemed prosaic [mundane] to the family, yet in the long run they have been a powerful force for good."

There is a huge importance placed on the head of the household in bringing his family to the right attitude and truth.

The fourth beneficial characteristic is that a household based on truth will have meaningful and honorable communication. When members of a family agree to live in oneness, they are more willing to engage in lengthy discussions in order to resolve important issues.

Turn with me to Romans 1. Truthfulness in speech and character is a quality that should be found in godly people. When it is found in a person it is commended, and its lack is condemned. With truth in people, as in the case of truth in God, truth is revealed in social relationships and responsibilities.

Truth is not merely in speech, nor is it only response to a specific command or word, but lies in the response of the will to the essential obligations of one's being. What that means is that it depends on whether we are willing to relinquish control of our lives to God, to relinquish our will to God's will.

Romans 1:18-25 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

They not only dishonored their own personal bodies but they also dishonored their households.

Romans 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Truth in man is in response to truth in God. Truth is acquired as a gift from God. This gift comes by way of teaching and also by way of the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of human beings.

Highest truth in correspondence to ideal is possible only by the working of "the God of truth" in the spirit of the man. Man's freedom to realize his being is dependent upon his receptive attitude toward the Son of God. Salvation in its fullest idea is stated in terms of truth.

In Jeremiah 9, verses 3-9, Jeremiah warns Israel that she is guilty of exchanging the truth of God for the lie.

The fifth beneficial characteristic of truth is that a household based on truth gives greater security and stability for each family member. Both parents and children find comfort in a firm foundation of truth, as do all the brethren in the church find comfort, security, and stability.

Turn with me to Proverbs 12. Regarding the preserving of the Family, United States President Ronald Regan made this proclamation on November 3, 1981 during National Family Week (This is a different year than the other one I read to you):

"The family is the basic unit of our society, the heart of our free democracy. It provides love, acceptance, guidance, support, and instruction to the individual. Community values and goals that give America strength also take root in the home. In times of change and challenge, families keep safe our cultural heritage and reinforce our spiritual foundation."

And in Proverbs 12, I will read verses 17-19.

Proverbs 12:17-19 He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health. The truthful lip shall be established forever.

Truth is everlasting. God's truth is a gift. It is a guarantee of constancy and a foundation of confidence in His household. It is a basis of security in the correctness of His teachings.

James 1:17-18 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

God has given to us the wonderful gift of His truth through His written Word and He has willed that His truth is to be freely given by Jesus Christ through His own church—the household of God.

The household is *willed* by God the Father—to stand against the forces of evil. Both physical and spiritual households **stand** by having its waist girded with truth, the first piece of armor, in the armor of God. We are no longer strangers to God, but fellow citizens with the saints and member of the household of God.

And as the leaders of the physical households work to stabilize and establish their households in the truth, so also the leaders of God church must work to establish and guard the truth in the household of God.