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CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (2)

"How Many Churches Are There?"

Last month, we noticed that the religious division that exists in our world is condemned by God. My personal curiosity has been aroused as to how anyone could believe in ONE God and ONE Savior and ONE Bible, yet MANY churches. The logic of this reasoning escapes me.

It will be the endeavor of this article to explore the Biblical answer to our question, "How many churches are there?" Man says there are many churches, and basically, one is as good as another. However, if any of us are to make it to Heaven, we must find out and follow what God says about this.

Let us note several scriptures (emphasis mine, C.C.):

"And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build **my church**; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18)

"But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning **the kingdom** of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women?" (Acts 8:12; cf. Mark 9:1)

"For in one Spirit were we all baptized into **one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free: and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13)

"and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to **the church**, which is **his body**

the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22,23)

"There is **one body**, and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling." (Eph. 4:4)

"Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed **the church** of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)

I think one can readily see that if God is to be believed (and He is), then there is only **one church**. Jesus never claimed to be the founder of many churches, but simply "my church." He is the head of only one church, not many churches. It should be noted that "many churches" does not equal "one church." Who are we to believe? Man or God?

Please give prayerful consideration to the things that have been said, and examine the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

Charles Coats

THE HOME AS GOD WOULD HAVE IT

By Toney L. Smith

In Ephesians 5, the home is compared to love and respect for the church. Verses 25-28 of the chapter teach that the home and marriage is to be undefiled. The vast majority of the world do not know the blessings of a happy and stable home. With the rapid changes in society, the home as God would have it is quickly vanishing from the scene. Now more than ever, every member of a family must do

all within their power to keep the home undefiled and pure in the sight of God.

Besides the church, there is no institution this side of heaven as important as the home. It is ordained of God (Gen. 2:18-24). When God presented Eve to Adam (vs. 22), that was the beginning of the home. The home is a Divine establishment, therefore, it must be preserved and kept just as God would have it.

Homes today, to a great degree, have lost their sense of stability and the permanent nature given it by God. In Matthew 19:3-6, Jesus reminds us of the ageless principle, "one man, one woman, till death severs" ("till death do we part"). God's original plan for marriage still stands today. Do we not make the same promise to each other in our wedding vows? "To love and cherish till death we do part" is still the promise that men make when entering into this state of matrimony! But thousands upon thousands have never paid attention to the plan from God nor to the vows which they make. The outcome of this lack of respect for God's Word has brought heartache upon heartache. Marriage is for real; it is for life.

From 1965 until 1978, marriages increased in this country 26% but in the same time frame, divorce increased 90%. Why is this so? Why are there so many homes that break up? One reason is that far too many are not serious about the marriage. Many are "playing" at the game of life! There is no commitment to staying together. And this is brought about because they are not serious about doing God's will. The world is not concerned with eternity; only with today! Why do men not realize that God was serious about the permanent nature of the home when He said through Malachi, "Therefore

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THE HOME AS GOD WOULD HAVE IT

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take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, Saith that He hateth putting away..." (Malachi 2:15-16)? God said that man is to "leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). The word cleave is the Hebrew word DAW-BAK and means "to abide fast, cleave (fast together), be joined, keep fast, persue hard, stick." When God said "cleave" surely He meant that it was to last. He did not intend for the marriage bond to be broken by men. "So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). The "what" of verse 6 is neuter in gender. This means that it does not refer to male or female, but to the UNION: the marriage. Jesus is thus stating that what God has DONE let not any man try to UNDO!

Many other passages plainly teach that the home is to be permanent in nature: Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Luke 16:18; Malachi 2:14. God desires that the home be a permanent union. This bond can only be broken by death (Romans 7:1-4; I Cor. 7:39) and fornication (Matthew 19:9; 5:32). The act of fornication by one mate gives the **innocent party** the right to remarry. These are the only exceptions given in scripture where there can be a second marriage in the life of an individual. Many have searched for other reasons, but there are none!

The home as God would have it is filled with genuine love. Like many words today, love has, in many cases, lost its true meaning. Many today enter into marriage completely uninformed of what love really is. Some are selfish and love is one sided. It is to them a taking and never giving. To many love is equated with physical attraction. That plays a role, but it is not the essence of love. For the home to be pleasing to God, love must be without question. It must be as we find in I Corinthians 13. Here love is described as "longsuffering, kind, not envious, vaunteth not self, not puffed up, not selfish, not irritable, pure minded, disapproves of sin, loves honesty, faces life, looks on the bright side, optimistic, never giving up and is victorious" (4-8). Love in the home is mutual trust, concern and total commitment to faithfulness. Homes today need great amounts of love for God, mankind, and for each other. If there is true love in a home it will be beautiful and lasting.

For a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church, and for him to love her as his own body (Ephesians 5:25, 28), and to treasure her as a "precious possession" (I Peter 3:7), is a love so comprehensive as to contain all the beautiful parts in every word Jesus and His apostles used to describe and define man's feelings and duties for his wife. The kind of love the home is to have goes beyond the instinctive and emotional. William Barclay said it is to seek the highest good for our mates. It is love, not because of but in spite of. He stated it this way, "No matter who or what you are, no matter the circumstances and vicissitudes of life, I will love you with a steadfast and unabandoning love." This is the kind of love that will cause homes to last throughout life. This is the home as God would have it.

The home as God would have it must be based upon spiritual unity. The single greatest contribution one can make to the home is faithfulness to God. When we see this in homes we see homes free of continuing sin and guilt. Husbands are exhorted to love their wives as Christ loved the

church (Eph. 5). And wives are to love their husbands and be subject to them (I Peter 3:1-2). This is not possible unless there is a spiritual unity in the home. The Bible must be the standard for family living. When the home is committed to Christ, then the home will be as God would have it. Each member is concerned with the other's salvation more than anything else. More than money, fame, or prestige.

This spiritual unity is extended to each and every member of the home. It is so important for the children to see and hear God's Word in the home. Knowledge of the Bible is the basis for saving faith (Romans 10:17). Parents are to lead the children in the way of righteousness (Eph. 6:1-4). In this verse we are shown the responsibility of child and parent. This spiritual unity is as God would have the home. Any other way is not pleasing to Him.

The home is precious and wonderful when it is as God would have it. For this to be possible it MUST be dedicated to being PERMANENT full of proper LOVE, and filled with studying and living GOD'S WORD. When these things are in place the home will be as God would have it.

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"BRING THEM UP"

By Larry D. Mathis

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath (anger): but BRING THEM UP (emphasis mine, LDM), in the nurture (training, education, discipline) and admonition (instruction, counsel) of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) How are we rearing our children? Every child is "brought-up" some way or another! Many children are physically abused and neglected and this is terrible. Parents who do such can be prosecuted for this is nothing less than criminal negligence. But what of the parents who abuse and neglect a child spiritually? We know that God will prosecute such parents on judgment day. It is hoped that this

brief article will cause us all to reflect on the seriousness of parenthood.

Parenthood involves great responsibility. At birth, God, man and woman, have jointly cooperated in bringing into being a brand new life - a new soul, which never existed before (now exists), and will exist forever. A few short years will be spent on earth and then a vast eternity beyond. Our main duty toward our children is to equip them for this eternity! **"Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."** (Ephesians 6:4).

Leading your child(ren) to Christ is one of the greatest blessings of parenthood. Both of our children are faithful Christians, for which we are thankful. Some parents will never know this wonderful joy. Why? Because some parents would have to make considerable changes in their own lives first before they could lead their child to the Lord. Would you?

There is an observable cycle in our midst in the church and we need to break it. It is the cycle of unfaithfulness begetting unfaithfulness. Though there are exceptions, usually unfaithful parents beget unfaithful children. Whether or not your children will one day be faithful themselves is in large measure being determined right now by the choices you are making.

What kind of impression is made when parents get the children out in freezing weather to go to a ballgame on Saturday night, but keep them home on the Lord's Day because it is too cold? Or, parents who stay home to take care of "chores" on Sunday and excuse themselves because they were not quite up "to par", for worship?

How often it happened that years pass before parents see the necessity of bringing children up to be faithful to the Lord? Now it is too late! They now see their grandchildren being reared like they reared their children - apart from "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4). The failure of many young people can be traced to the fact that they have had a pitifully poor example to pattern

their lives after. We brought our children into the world and we are under every obligation to bring them up the Lord's way.

I once read, *"Twelve Rules For Raising Delinquent Children."* This list was drawn up by the police department in Houston, Texas.

1. Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.

2. When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he's cute. It will also encourage him to pick up "cuter" phrases that will blow off the top of your head later.

3. Never give him any spiritual training. Wait until he is twenty-one and then let him "decide for himself."

4. Avoid the use of the word "wrong." It may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he is being persecuted.

5. Pick up everything he leaves lying around - books, shoes, and clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility onto others.

6. Let him read any printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.

7. Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way they will not be too shocked when the home is broken up later.

8. Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?

9. Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.

10. Take his part against neighbors, teachers, and policemen. They all are prejudiced against your child.

11. When he gets into real trouble apologize for yourself by saying, "I never could do anything with him."

12. Prepare for a life of grief. You will be apt to have it.

Conclusion: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4, KJV.)

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THE ANEMIC CHRISTIAN

By Larry Corbett

"For this cause many are weak, and sickly among you, and many sleep." (I Cor. 11:30)

While there are numerous problems with some members of the church, we must be objective in looking at ourselves for problems of weakness and sickness. One problem indicated by the above Scripture is spiritual anemia.

Anemia literally means a lack of blood. The medical definition is a condition in which the red corpuscles of the blood are reduced in number or are deficient in hemoglobin. It is also a synonym for weakness. A Christian who is spiritually or morally weak is in need of a spiritual physician. In our prayers we should remember the spiritually weak as well as the physically weak.

The congregations of the church spoken of in the New Testament also had weak members. In Romans 15:1 Paul wrote, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." The church at Corinth, as indicated in I Corinthians 11:30, had weak and sickly members. Also to the church at Thessalonica, Paul wrote, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." (I Thessalonians 5:14).

The anemic Christian is one with a divided allegiance. He has little or no convictions. Jesus pointed out in Matthew 6:24 that no man can serve two masters: for he would hold to one and despise the other. To become spiritually strong, one must center his life on one major goal and purpose.

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Another problem with the anemic Christian is his slow pace. Paul describes this in Galatians 5:7. "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth." The Galatians had started the race well, but for lack of spiritual energy they had slowed their running pace.

In Hebrews 5:12-14 Paul wrote to Christians whose spiritual energy was so sapped they weren't progressing at all. He said, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

The anemic Christian has a weak resistance to temptations. He does, however, have a good appetite for television, movies, ball games, card games, magazines, etc. He literally "eats them up." But he has no appreciation of visiting the sick, teaching lost souls, attending gospel meetings, and inviting friends to worship with him. He can get involved in the home, at the school, on the job, or for some club. He is busy here and there except for the Lord.

The Lord understands that it takes time to mature as a Christian, but after a time, spiritual weakness is a sin. It is inexcusable. It is wickedness and slothfulness, and it places the Christian once again in a lost condition.

We should all be alert to signs of spiritual anemia in our life. If we find ourselves growing weaker instead of stronger, and if we find that we are not using fully the talents with which God has blessed us, we should immediately repent and return to the Lord with a greater determination for serving Christ than ever before.

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The Church of Christ

1. The Bible is its only guide (Rom. 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical name (Rom. 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isa. 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Eph. 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands, including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Cor. 12:13).

God's Plan of Salvation

1. Hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Heb. 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3,4).
6. After 1 - 5, faithful Christian living (I Pet. 2:11, 12; Rev. 2:10).

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