

# Taking Care of the Family of God

By Kevin White

Throughout the Word of God we are exhorted that ministry begins at home. We are to care for and minister to our families first. We are to get and keep our house in order before we leave it and go out to minister. Our ministry beyond our home is ineffective if we are neglecting to minister in our home to our family.

How does this relate to our spiritual family? As God establishes Himself in an individual family He also calls them to be in fellowship with other brothers and sisters in Christ. God brings several individual families together into a larger spiritual family or congregation. These congregational families may be many different sizes, but they are all to share the same common purposes. One of those purposes is to care for one another.

When the Holy Spirit filled the believers in Acts 2 it resulted in the believers selling their possessions and giving the proceeds to the leadership of the congregation to be giving to those in need within the family of God. It is recorded that no one had need (Acts 2:43-47).

Where is this today? Often I receive phone calls from people needing financial assistance. I share with them 4 steps I see outlined in the Bible: (1) Cry out to God. Hear and obey Him. As He guides, (2) share the need within your family, (3) share the need with your church leadership, and finally (4) seek public assistance. Most people jump to step 4 first.

Unfortunately, when I ask, "Is your church leadership aware of your need?" many people respond, "No, I have not thought of that." Or "I am not comfortable doing that." Or, "Yes, but they can't help." All three of these responses are tragic. All three must grieve our Heavenly Father.

When I share these four steps I do not ask, "Do you have a church home?" Obviously some do not yet know Christ or have a church home. I find no provision in the Bible for getting our needs met apart from Christ. God does not offer a plan B. His only plan is that we get all our needs met in Christ. So I explain, "It is horrible to experience any crisis! But, it is a tragedy to go through a crisis without the support of the body of Christ – our brothers and sisters in Christ with you praying for you, loving you, encouraging you, assisting you in your time of need! We need them!"

Consider the outside world is looking into our congregations. Why should they want to come be a part of the family of God? What if they find themselves in some crisis? Will they know how to Biblically respond? Which call is going out, "Do not suffer alone" or "Don't expect much from us"?

Jesus said, "They will know you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). John says, "Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions" (1 John 3:18).

A great tragedy is occurring throughout the Body Christ as we are spending more time, energy, and money on our physical buildings than we are on our people. Some churches are budgeting thousands of dollars for "missions" while single mothers in their congregation are facing eviction. Some churches give more money to strangers at the door than they do to their own congregation.

Let me assure you that I am all for leading the world to Jesus Christ. I have devoted my life to it! Let us remember that in Acts 2 we read, “And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need.” *THEN* we read, “And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.” Our loving and taking care of one another is our greatest witness to the outside world!

What about the children coming to church hungry? What about the high-tech professional who has been laid-off and is facing foreclosure? What about the single mother who has not had a new dress in two years? What about the missionary family who needs a car? What about the widow whose car is broke down? What about the migrant family without furniture? What about the family whose power was turned off yesterday yet no one in the church even knows about it?

Do these things bring glory to God? Is this the witness we want in our community? What does this say about Jesus? Does He really say, “Come receive eternal life, but don’t ask for physical help or financial assistance!” I hope this is not the message we are sharing.

Every biological family should be open to joining God in His work of meeting the needs within the family. If the immediate family is unable then there should be support from the extended family. This should be true within the body of Christ too. Each congregation should seek (and budget) to address the needs within the congregation. They should also seek (and budget) to address the needs within the greater body of Christ.

Here is a good example from one local pastor I know. When he receives calls for financial assistance from people outside his congregation he tells them, “Go to your pastor and have them call me if they need our help ministering to you.” God’s ONLY plan for meeting our needs is through His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. There is no plan B! I suspect that we are not always committed to plan A so the world cannot see it, understand it, and enter it.

In this day of high need within our world let us therefore resolve that the family of God be seen taking care of the family of God! Let us give the world another reason why they want to be apart of this family. If we must respond, “But we do not have the resources to help our families in need” let us remember three important passages of scripture:

- (1) In Acts 3:6 Peter responded to the beggar at the gate, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you in the name of Jesus!” Never minimize the power of prayer! We are not the provider! God is! We are simply to be WILLING to join Him in His work in every way.
- (2) Paul praises the Philippians for their generous giving to the work of the Lord as they were known to be one of the poorest churches of all (Phil. 4:14-20). The issue is not the availability of resources rather it is the willingness to distribute the resources given by God. God is already rich. He does not need riches. He only needs willing vessels to distribute His riches for Him.
- (3) In James 4:3 we read, “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures”. Are you asking for money to care for your congregation? Why should God give you money for His people if you are going to spend it in other ways?

Let us, the Body of Christ, stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions! *“The people of the world will see the good I do for my people and will tremble with awe!”* (Jeremiah 33:9b) So be it sweet Jesus!