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Acts 16:30-34; 18:1-3; 7-8; 24-28 “Household Christianity”

Intro. The Bible says that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Any sinner who is willing to turn from sin and believe in Jesus can be saved. But I believe God delights most in saving whole families as each one believes in Jesus. After all, the family is the foundation of church and society. I have just read to you several examples of God saving entire families. The Philippian jailor and his family were saved one night. In chapter 18 we are introduced to Aquila and Priscilla, a husband and wife that both worked with Paul and followed the Lord. O how God used this husband and wife ministry team! They were great Christian workers who later hosted a church in their home. We’re going to focus our attention mostly on that Christian family. Then in Acts 18:7 we read about Justus, who opened his home to Paul, and allowed him to use his home as the first church in Corinth. I’m sure his wife was saved as well. How could he invite all those people in their home without her approval? Then in v.8 Crispus believed with all his household. Furthermore, back in Acts 10 we are told that Cornelius feared God with all his house. I believe that his wife, children, and even some of the soldiers he commanded were saved. In Acts 21 Paul visited Philip, who had four daughters who prophesied. Think of that! He had four godly Christian daughters who served the Lord. We see this same truth in the Old Testament. Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Choose this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (24:15). It is God’s will that entire families follow the Lord together. Indeed, we are to build households of faith.

But even though I have shown you the way family life *should* be, the reality is that too often families are not united in worshipping and serving the Lord. Jesus warned that this could be the case. In Matthew 10:34-37 Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” That’s a tragic situation. Jesus warned that some families would be divided. Some would believe in Him, but some would not, and the unbelievers in the family would even become hostile against believers. And I’m sure we have some here today who are part of a family that is divided over loyalty to Jesus Christ. I believe this problem will be greater as we get closer to the return of Jesus.

Yet what are we to do when we have loved ones who are not believers? Are we to compromise or deny our Christian faith just to obtain peace and unity in the family? No, for Christ goes on to say in v.37, “He that loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loves son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.” No, our absolute loyalty must remain with Jesus Christ. Now I hope that this message will help in uniting your whole family in worshipping and in serving the Lord. But if not, remember that last verse that I quoted; you must stay true to the Lord even if the rest of your family does not join with you.

But getting back to our model family, I want to share with you some principles that you should seek to follow as they relate to your family life:

## I. WE ARE TO WITNESS TO UNSAVED FAMILY

Now that statement is in conflict with what the world says. Often we hear someone say, “Religion is a private matter.” Well, a relationship with God and a person’s faith *is a personal*

matter, in that each person must decide for themselves what they will believe. But Christianity is not a private religion. True Christianity is missionary in nature. We are called by God to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt. 5:12-16). We are not to keep our faith to ourselves. So with that in mind, notice with me first of all:

A. The Missionary Mandate - We have indeed received a missionary mandate from Lord. He said in Mt. 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." Then in Acts 1:8 He said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Our missionary obligation begins with:

1. Witness to Family - Dt. 6:6-7 says, "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." Missions begins at home. Our first responsibility is to pass on our faith to our children and then to our grandchildren. There are some people who have this crazy idea that we are to raise our children religiously neutral and let them decide for themselves. Now they do have to decide for themselves regarding Jesus Christ, and it can't be forced upon them, but we must do all we can to lead them to the Lord. I can assure you that the devil and his crowd will not be religiously neutral. They will do all they can to lead your children away from the Lord.

One example of someone who want to influence his family for the Lord was Cornelius. Acts 10:24 says, "And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends." Cornelius wanted his family and friends to hear Peter, the man of God, so they could also know the Lord.

So these verses show that we are to communicate our faith to those within our family. That is the first area of missionary and evangelistic work for a Christian. Are you sharing your faith with your family? The next time you get together with your broader family at Easter, Thanksgiving or Christmas, is there someone in your family that you should speak to about your faith? These Christian holiday gatherings are opportunities for witness.

Then the next field of mission service would be:

2. Witness to Others We Know – You should use your influence to bring others you know to faith in Christ. That would include friends, neighbors, coworkers, and so forth. Over the next six weeks you will be hearing a good bit about "Bless Every Home." If you go to [www.sbcv.org/blesseveryhome/](http://www.sbcv.org/blesseveryhome/), you can learn more about how you can be a witness for Christ in your neighborhood. I encourage you to go ahead and register your participation and begin reading through the resources they have online. I quickly found out that I could see who else in my neighborhood is seeking to reach my neighbors. I hope we can partner together to pray for, serve, witness to, and disciple our neighbors.

Now here's a test of how well you have been doing. What would the people you work with tell me if I were to ask them if you are a Christian? Do they know that you are a Christian by your life and by what you say to them?

B. The Missionary Methods - How are we to reach the people I have talked about?

1. Maintain a Consistent Testimony of Life – If you are not living the Christian life, it will be really hard for you to be an effective witness. Peter gives an example of how this principle applies to wives. He says in 1 Peter 3:1-2, "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear." Notice that

this verse supports the previous point that we are to win our family members to faith in Christ. And yet we see that wives are to win their unsaved husbands, not by nagging them into the kingdom, but with their Christian conduct. This is especially true in witnessing to family members. No one knows you better than your own family. They know if your faith is real. If you're one of these Sunday Christians, you are not going to win unsaved family members to the Lord, because they see how you really live Monday – Saturday.

By the way, Thom Rainer has pointed out that the number one influencer for grown men becoming Christians is their wives who know the Lord.

2. Gain a Knowledge of the Scriptures - Now getting back to our model Christian husband and wife team, Aquila and Priscilla moved to Ephesus with Paul, and there they planned to help get a Christian church started in that large city. So, like Paul, they went to the synagogue to discover the prospects for a new church. And there they heard a guest speaker named Apollos. He was an eloquent speaker, and we read in 18:24 that he was “mighty in the Scriptures.” In other words, he knew the Old Testament Scriptures very well, and he was effective in his use of the Scriptures. But there was a problem with Apollos. As we see in v.25, he only knew about the baptism and message of John the Baptist. Apollos did not have a full knowledge of who the Messiah was. Evidently, he was still looking for the Messiah to come. He probably had heard John the Baptist preach about the coming Messiah. Apollos repented of his sins and was baptized. Then in his zeal for the Lord he took it upon himself to go to the Jews in the more distant cities and preach John's message about the coming Messiah. Yet he did not know who the Messiah was.

Now my main point is found in the last of v.26, where we read that “When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” For them to lead Apollos to faith in Jesus Christ, they needed to know the Scriptures as well or better than Apollos. They had to show him how Jesus had already fulfilled many Messianic prophecies. As a result of their instruction, we read in v.28 that Apollos himself “vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.”

Even so, you will become more effective witness for the Lord if you know the Bible well. Therefore, you need to have the self-discipline required to read the Bible every day. You need to bring your Bible to Sunday School and the church services and learn God's Word from gifted and knowledgeable teachers. You do not need to have a Bible College or Seminary degree to learn the Bible. And so if you witness to someone of your faith, you will probably get some questions about the Bible, or someone may challenge you to back up what you believe. So I encourage you to be diligent in gaining a knowledge of the Scriptures so you will be better prepared to be an effective witness.

I remember the time I was working in my garage and some Mormon missionaries rode up on their bicycle. So I asked them about their beliefs, and then refuted each one from Scriptures that I knew, and shared the true gospel. After a while the elder missionary decided he better get his younger apprentice away from me! My knowledge of the Scriptures was certainly helpful in this situation. In fact, if you don't know the Scriptures well, you should take the 2 John 10<sup>1</sup> approach and not even talk to cult missionaries, but send them on their way.

However, don't wait until you have an advanced knowledge of the Scriptures to begin to witness. You can always start with what you do know, such as your testimony, and if someone asks you a question you don't know the answer to, then just tell them, “I don't know, but I can get you an answer.” We have pastors and Bible teachers in this church that can help you.

3. Engage in Personal Witnessing – Especially in our day, most people are not going to be saved by inviting them to church to hear preaching. And even among those who do visit the

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<sup>1</sup> “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.”

church, it will often require personal witnessing for them to become Christians. For example, notice in v.26 that they “took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” Apollos was certainly a prime prospect for hearing about Jesus! You need to be on the lookout for such people. Look for opportunities to witness, just as Aquila and Priscilla witnessed to Apollos about Jesus Christ. They ventured on the delicate and difficult task of instructing a preacher! But notice how they did that. They didn’t go at him in a carping, critical way. Notice what they did:

a) They talked with him privately – They didn’t stand up in the synagogue and say, “Apollos, don’t you know who the Messiah is? Where have you been?” Instead, they “took him aside....” How much better it is to give such private help to a preacher whose ministry is defective than to correct or denounce him publicly!

b) They approached him as one just needing more instruction - Sometimes we find fault with people because they do not see more clearly. But we forget that they have not been instructed. Aquila and Priscilla realized that Apollos just needed more light. Even so, many unbelievers have simply never heard a clear and simple Gospel presentation. So we should do what Aquilla and Priscilla did. I think that they went up to him after the meeting and said, “Brother Apollos, we certainly enjoyed your message this morning. We would love to have you come home and have dinner with us.” Now we do not know for sure that they had him over for dinner, but I believe that is a likely assumption. In fact, the word translated “took him aside” (*proslambano*) can mean “to take or receive into one’s home,” which typically involved sharing a meal.<sup>2</sup> And then at an appropriate time they began to share with him about Jesus Christ, and how He had fulfilled the prophecies that Apollos himself had spoken of. I’m sure they pointed out to him the prophecies about the sufferings and death of the Messiah and of Jesus. They shared the prophecies about the resurrection of Christ. Apollos probably understood all this from the prophetic standpoint but was not yet informed as to the riches of its fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth. And evidently, he received with humility and gratitude the help extended to him, leading to a greatly enlarged understanding and ministry as I have already pointed out in the last of v.28.

Application:

A) Advice to You with Unsaved Family Members – Don’t be bitter against unbelieving family members. I know you want a Christian home. Be patient. Keep praying for them. Show them that Christianity is real. Don’t ever give up.

B) Advice to Young People – God’s plan is for you to have a Christian family. Therefore, you need to be careful to marry only in the Lord. 2 Cor. 6:14 says, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” Paul applies that principle specifically to marriage in 1 Cor. 7:39, “... if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.” Adrian Rogers said, “If you marry a child of the devil (Jn. 8:44) you will have the devil for a father-in-law!” [Illus.#C-1642]. There have been a few success stories of so-called “missionary dating,” especially when the believer was a strong Christian. But for every success story there are probably 4 times as many who fell in love and married unbelievers who never became Christians. So don’t pay much attention to what they say, but watch to see if he or she bears the fruit of being a true Christian.

## II. YOUR FAITH IS TO BE WORKED OUT WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS

There are a number of Scripture passages that show the importance of mutual support in our Christian faith. One reason is because the devil is against you. The world is against your Christian

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<sup>2</sup> See how the word is used in 27:34, 36; 28:2; Phm. 1:17.

faith. Your own sin nature is against you. So you really need a lot of support from other believers to live the Christian life. Now many of you are blessed to have that support in your own family, where family members share your faith in Christ, give encouragement, and hold each other accountable. Noah stood with God against the whole world, and it must have helped that at least his family supported him! But if you are the only Christian in your family, you *especially* need the support of believers in your church family. Col. 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another...” Suppose that Christian friend is going through a difficulty, or facing a great task, and you encourage him by quoting Php. 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Each of us are to learn the Word of God well, and then we are to teach one another and admonish one another. And 1 Thess. 5:11 says, “Wherefore, comfort one another, and each one build up the other, as you are doing.” We need one another as believers. You will likely fail in the Christian life if you violate this “one another” principle. You need to have frequent contact with other Christians who want to live for the Lord. As you teach each other, as you encourage each other, and as you serve the Lord together, you will do much better in the Christian life.

Now let’s look at two main realms of mutual support.

A. As a Family - In God’s plan, the starting place for this mutual support should be the Christian family.

1. Grow Spiritually with Your Family. The Christian father should take the lead in making disciples of his family, but the mother certainly has an important role.

2. Worship Together. Do so at least weekly. That’s what Aquilla and Pricilla did, according to v.26.

3. Serve the Lord Together – Aquilla and Pricilla are great examples of this (v.26b). They witness and served together.

B. With Friends Who Are Christians - It is difficult to serve the Lord alone. We are to support each other in our Christian faith. But too often we are attacking each other rather than supporting each other. But in Acts 18 we see several examples of the importance of mutual support in Christian work and in Christian living.

1. Strengthen Other Believers at Church - In v.23 we read, “After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.” In this verse we find the account of the beginning of Paul’s third missionary journey. And how did he begin this trip? He started out by going back where he had started churches on his other missionary journeys, so that he could encourage and build up those churches. As the verse states, he strengthened the disciples in those churches. An example of what Paul did in those churches is found in Romans 1:11-12, “For I long to see you, ... so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.” They needed Paul and Paul needed them. We need each other. That is one reason why I encourage you to be active in coming to church. You need the support of other believers if you are to succeed in the Christian life.

2. Find a Church Wherever You Move - Another example is found in v.27 we read, “And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.” After Apollos had grown a little while in his Christian faith, he wanted to move over to Corinth. He wanted to join with the believers there. So the church in Ephesus wrote a letter commending Apollos to their fellowship. I suppose this is the origin of our practice of joining another church when we move to a new community and joining that church by letter. And when Apollos got to Corinth I’m sure that

that church helped him continue to grow in the Christian faith. But Apollos was a great blessing to them, for we read in the last of v.27, “and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.” Apollos knew the importance of joining up with a local body of believers.

So if you move away, be sure you find another church and join it. You should do so within a year. You will not find exactly what you are looking for, but find one that come pretty close and get involved in a local.

3. Join a Small Group - 1 Cor. 16:19 says, “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” From this verse we see that Aquila and Priscilla hosted a church in their house! A church that can fit in a house is essentially a small group. So if you want to really grow in your Christian faith and also help others, join a S.S. class or Bible study group, a home group, a prayer group, or even a service group, such as the choir. In a small group you can pray together, learn together, serve together, support each other, give and receive exhortation, rejoice together, and even cry together. It is not enough just to listen to preaching, especially when you do so only on TV, or radio, or the Internet. Such preaching can supplement what you hear in the local church, but it is not a substitute, except for those who are homebound. Listening to preaching is important for learning, but it is not interactive and too passive. You also need to be involved in a small group that encourages mutual “one another” ministry.

Conclusion and Appeal: Do you have a Christian family? I wonder if there is someone here today who needs to be saved, so you can make your family a *Christian* family? Do so today. It is so wonderful to have family in which everyone believes in Jesus.

If your family is not complete in Christ, perhaps you would want to come to our prayer altar to pray for their salvation.

If you have a Christian family, then I encourage you to have family devotions, pray together, and make a commitment to come to church together, and serve together.

If you are saved, but not yet a member of our church, today would be a good time to follow the example of Apollos, and join our church.

Sources: F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954); Oliver B. Greene, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Vol. 1 (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1968); Everett F. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975); H.A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Acts* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers 1943); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); A.T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Pictures*, Vol. IV (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931); Dr. Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon on this text). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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