

The Minister of Christ and His Obligations to His Family

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“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy: having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.” I Timothy 4: 1-3. The fulfillment of this New Testament prophecy and warning of the spreading of false doctrines within the Church, doctrines which would forbid marriage for some has come true in the Roman Catholic Church. Since the eleventh century the Roman Catholic Church has praised and demanded the celibate life for its clergy and raised celibacy to one of the higher planes of personal righteousness and holiness of life that avails before God. Since recently great numbers of priests and nuns have forsaken their vows of chastity and celibacy in order to marry and Pope Paul VI has made great efforts to stem the tide of requests for a married clergy within the Roman Catholic Church, one wonders how long the Roman Catholic Church will want to hold out and enforce its rule of celibacy. It was somewhat irritating to me once when my neighboring Roman Catholic priest tried to point out to me the advantages of the celibate life and his vow of poverty with an air of spiritual superiority and unselfish sacrifice. One day in winter I had stopped at his rectory to deliver a parcel that was delivered to our church by mistake. After he invited me into the rectory kitchen, which looked like a disaster area, he apologized and explained that his housekeeper, who wasn't very tidy, had a few weeks off. After one look at his kitchen and hearing his explanation, I couldn't help but suggest that he try marriage. If he married he might have a more orderly kitchen, especially if he chose a woman who loved to cook. In his defense he cited various reasons, especially his church ordinances, why he couldn't marry and proceeded to tell me about the advantages of his vows of poverty and celibacy. I can remember distinctly that he didn't refer to any Scripture in his defense. After he had led me on a tour of his well furnished but rather drafty rectory, I left. Later when I saw him driving his Buick Rivera, remembered all the best Kodak movie camera equipment which littered his office, and then chatted with him at the A & P and saw all the choice items in his shopping cart, I found myself thinking, “Oh, if only I could live in such poverty”. But that evening on one of those icy winter nights when the winds blasted off Lake Michigan and I could warm my feet in bed by snuggling up to my wife, I thought of my Roman Catholic neighbor whose rectory is right on the lake bank and I gloated about my advantages over him and thought, “It's far better to marry than to freeze.”

I am certain that you would be able to think of far more blessings and advantages of being married and not being forced to follow the celibate life in your ministry. However Scripture does speak about remaining unmarried. St. Paul wrote: “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” I Corinthians 7:12. “For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.” I Corinthians 7: 7-9. The apostle Paul was not against marriage. When Paul wrote these words through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost he wrote to answer particular questions that the Corinthians had asked concerning marriage. He addressed

his words to their specific circumstances, in particular to the difficulties and dangers that they had to face in the corrupt, heathen world. Paul pointed out that something should be said in favor of remaining unmarried. He had spoken before about his self-control and self-mastery as gifts of God but gifts not intended for every Christian. Paul used these gifts in the interest of his life's work and calling as an apostle, who traveled far and wide and for this reason was thankful that through these gifts of God he could remain unmarried and be without marital or family responsibilities. Of course, not every servant of Christ has been given these gifts from God nor need we feel cheated or ashamed without them. How thankful we, who are married, can be that God has led us to be joined in marriage to a loving spouse and that He in His wisdom and love has blessed us with the gift of children. But with these blessings come also obligations and responsibilities. I would like to point you to some of these obligations and responsibilities by following the theme assigned to me, namely, "The Minister of Christ And His Obligations To His Family".

I intend to deal with this topic by giving attention to I. The minister of Christ and his obligations to his Lord as they affect his family: II. His obligations to his spouse; III. His obligations to his children.

I. The minister of Christ and his obligations to his Lord as they affect his family

We know that the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ has to be preached and taught. The Scriptures give us and all believers in Christ direct instructions and commands of our Lord, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:19-20. To propagate the Gospel, Jesus called twelve men to whom Scripture give the title of "apostles." The word means ambassadors. They were to be His special witnesses and that is an office and function they fulfilled. Their number was added to when Paul was called. At times even others were given this title, as Barnabas and Silas, the companions and co-workers of Paul. This fact is in line with the freedom which prevails in the New Testament times and the carrying out of the doctrine of the ministry of the keys. But the apostolic office was not continued when these special witnesses of Christ were summoned to eternal rest. In the early Christian Church others were called directly by the Lord and endowed with special so-called charismatic gifts for the spreading of the Gospel, but their positions were not continued when the charismatic gifts ceases to be bestowed. You might recall here the prophets in the early church. There were other charismatic gifts such as speaking with tongues and the interpretation of the tongues, which were all intended by God to help in the furthering growth of the church. All these gifts have ceased to exist and are not prerequisite requirements for the Christian ministry. There is one office, not a charismatic one, which the Holy Scriptures indicate the church should have. It is the office of elder or bishop, which the New Testament Scriptures show us had the function of pastors and teachers, spiritual shepherds of Christ's lambs and sheep. Our Lutheran confessions in accord with Scripture tell us that whoever desires to have and occupy the office of a pastor or teacher should be called into this office. Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession states: "Of Ecclesiastical Orders they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called." Another compelling proof text for the filling of this office is Romans 10: 14-17, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them

that preach the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, "Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" These words imply that if a man is to be a preacher or a teacher of the Gospel, he should be sent. To be sent is merely another term for "to be called." I am sure that you will agree that it is the teaching of Scripture that preachers and teachers of the Gospel should be called for their blessed work.

The office of the Christian ministry is divine institution. Christ Himself called the apostles and thereby established the office of the New Testament ministry. He gave to congregations or groups of believers the authority to call pastors and teachers. Ephesians 4: 11-12 states, "He gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Our Lord assures us that those who have been rightfully called by the churches to be pastors and teachers of the Gospel have been called to such offices by Him. This should be of importance to each of us, first, to know that we have been put into the service of Jesus Christ by Christ Himself. You and I are in this office and service because Jesus has given us this high calling. Secondly, you and I are in the preaching or teaching ministry because a congregation, group of congregations or group of Christians have extended us a call to preach and teach as Christ's servants and His shepherds. We have an obligation to these believers, who in all sincerity, honesty and Christian hope have asked us to preach and teach the Gospel of our Lord in its truth and purity, to divide rightly the Word of Truth proclaiming both the Law and the Gospel to them, to administer the Sacraments in accordance with the inspired Word of God and the Confessions of our Evangelical Lutheran Church as laid down in the Book of Concord of 1580, and to establish and maintain sound Lutheran practice at all times. We are obligated to instruct and train the children diligently and faithfully in the chief truths of God's Word as they are revealed in the Scriptures and set forth particularly in Dr. Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* and to be diligent in fostering and furthering the educational agencies of our congregations. Some of us are obligated to discharge toward all the members of our congregations the functions of a pastor, that is, to watch over their souls in an evangelical manner, in particular to visit the sick and the dying, to admonish indifferent and erring members and to be ever zealous for the winning of souls for Christ's kingdom. Others of us are obligated to maintain Christian discipline in our schools, to submit ourselves to those who are responsible for the conduct of our schools and with the help of God to do everything within the limits of our calling for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. We all are asked and obligated to live in Christian unity with our co-workers, to walk and conduct ourselves at all times as is becoming for ministers of Christ so that by our Christian life we may be examples to all men. We are to devote our time, labor, strength and abilities to the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom until the day of the final harvest. Without going here into the particular duties and qualifications of our callings as ministers of Christ laid down chiefly in I Timothy, chapter 3 and Titus, chapter 1, what our Lord does impress upon us is that we should be faithful, ready, able workers. The Lord doesn't demand each of us to have our Master's degree or to be Doctors of Theology, although we should possess the best education and training possible. Our Lord does require us to be *faithful* in the use of our time, talents, abilities and in the opportunities God gives us, remembering that we are accountable always to Him even though we may do our work or use our time with comparatively little supervision. Faithfulness to our calling! We know that our ministries are more than full-time vocations. You have wrestled also with your conscience when deciding how your time

should be spent or your work schedule planned or which tasks should have priority over others. Each one of us, if we are faithful to our Lord, to our calling and to those who called us, have far more work to do than we have time to do it. We need to exercise extreme good judgment in the use of our time and must ask God's forgiveness for the misuse of our time and for periods of depression or slothfulness. In a Spirit-wrought humility of soul you and I should pray more earnestly each day that our God, who despite our unworthiness has granted us this high calling, would make us to be the kind of men He would have us be by dedicating ourselves unselfishly to Him and to His service with all our powers, abilities, mind, body and soul. Above all, that He grant us faithfulness to our calling.

Faithfulness to our Lord and to our ministry will bring about conflicts for us in our family life and obligations. Here is the crux of the problems we experience in our ministries: on the one hand we are to be faithful to our Lord, to our office and to those we have been called to serve; and on the other hand we are to be faithful to our spouse and children in our family relationship. I am certain that you have wrestled with these problems and decisions before, even as I have, and have made errors of judgment and mistakes that disappointed either your Lord or your wife and children, or both, even as I have done. As grateful believers, who would serve our Savior in loving devotion, we should try also, if we have been granted the blessing of a wife and family, to express the spirit of Christ-like love in our home and family life. Instead of proudly assuming that we can do no wrong, we should endeavor humbly, sincerely and earnestly to measure up to the divine ideal: "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it," and to the divine instruction, "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."ⁱ

II. The minister of Christ and his obligations to his spouse.

No other person is more helpful or of greater comfort and blessing to the called servant of Christ than a loving, unselfish, dedicated helpmate, who is willing to sacrifice for her husband and live with him in accordance with their God-given directives. All the passages of Scripture that apply to the Christian husband and wife apply to the minister of Christ and his spouse. Her attitude toward God's Word will have great bearing also upon her attitude toward the office and duties of her husband's vocation. It will influence her in the development of Christian virtues. It happens too often that a great share of the sacrifices, unselfishness, sympathy, understanding and willingness to share each other's burdens that God requires of both partners in marriage are things that we expect only of our wives. Someone has said, "A husband is a fellow who expects his wife to be perfect and to understand why he isn't." It isn't too difficult to become so wrapped up in your own work or your own little "professional" world that you forget or neglect your obligations to your spouse. We have a double role and greater obligations to our spouse and children being both their pastor and their loving husband and father.

As pastors and teachers in a congregation our married life is always on display. Under such pressure we may become overly demanding or critical toward our wives for any deviation from the stereotyped "minister's or teacher's wife" role and attempt to coerce them to conform. I cannot remember the reasons or circumstances that brought the subject up but I can remember many years ago while still in grade school how my sainted father remarked once, "Don't marry a teacher because they can't cook and don't drink coffee." I can remember in my early years that there was a succession of lady teachers at St. Paul's in Cudahy, Wis., who unfortunately, couldn't cook and didn't drink coffee. I know my father wasn't prejudiced against parochial lady teachers for these reasons because we entertained them often in our home, but it does show that

our lay members form stereotypes to which called workers and their wives are expected to conform. Perhaps your wife has experienced this. I suppose each of us have our own ideals and standards that we expect our wives to measure up to. We don't expect a pastor's or teacher's wife to be the "Miss Prissy Prim" or the "Raquel Welch" type, but perhaps something in between, and able to meet, handle, and cope with every situation that may arise in the parsonage or teacherage. Pastor Alfred O. Rast in "The Pastor's Family" seems to sum up the average ideals and qualification when he writes: "Christian humility, emotional balance, a friendly disposition, a sense of duty and diligence to fulfil it, the ability to speak and to keep silent at the right time, sympathy and kindly understanding, love for children and a desire to have children of her own, neatness in person and in keeping a household, and a sympathetic interest in her husband's work are important qualifications of a wife of the servant of the Gospel."ⁱⁱ

A conflict of our loyalties between church obligations and family obligations is difficult to avoid under normal circumstances. The one affected most is your wife. If you and I give little thought to the needs of our family, we may soon find ourselves with an unhappy wife. An unhappy wife does not really resent your vocation, but because she does feel neglected, she may think she has a rival for her husband's affections, time and concerns. She may become jealous of the church, the District or the Synod which occupy so much of her husband's life, energies and time. In reaction she may begin to nag and whine for more attention, but whining and nagging will only drive you further into your work. It's rough enough that your work is important, time consuming and energy-draining, but what frustrates your wife all the more is that it is religious. She and your children may feel guilty that they begrudge the church your time, energy and devotion, yet they may be unable to really express their complaints directly until they are emotionally distraught. Pauline Trueblood, an Anglican clergyman's wife had this to write in a book she and her husband authored, "Here I am (seven years later) surrounded by four children, tied to the house, expected to turn up at every cat hanging and feeling like a widow as my husband is always on duty." "Clergymen", she said, "ought to be celibate because no decent right-minded man ought to have the effrontery to ask any woman to take on a lousy job. It is thoroughly un-Christian."ⁱⁱⁱ May God keep our wives from such an attitude. But the dangers for them to form and harbor such attitudes can be there because of our own faults and neglect of faithfulness to our marriage vows.

If I would ask you, "Do you love your wife?" I am sure that you would reply in the affirmative. In so answering, you mean what you feel toward her or perhaps what you do for her by way of care and consideration. But consider the love of which St. Paul speaks in Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it", and in Colossians 3:19, "Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them. This kind of love is measured not just by what you feel nor by what you do. It is measured by the sacrifice of one's self.

The highest duty of the Christian husband is to care for the sanctification of his wife. He ought not only to lead her in a Christian walk and life, he ought also to do everything in his power to make the full blessings of God accessible to her and not discourage her in her God-given calling. Although Scripture speaks of a wife being submissive to her husband, it does not mean servility. Submissiveness is not a matter of mere outward form but of inner attitude. A wife can be a person of strong, even outspoken opinions and convictions, and still be submissive to her husband's authority, if she respects him and is quite prepared and content for him to make and carry out the final decisions. But a wife who scarcely opens her mouth with an idea of her own, who never questions her husband's decisions and goes along with all his schemes, no

matter how foolish, may underneath it all nurse a deep and sullen rebellion. God has given your wife talents and abilities. Her intelligence may not be inferior or may be superior to yours. Her stamina and endurance may often be greater than yours. Your Lord does not want your wife to bury her capabilities. He wants to channel them to excellent use in your home and in His service. So in your husband-wife relationship your wife should feel free to express her thoughts, convictions and opinions and you should not stifle her personality, her capabilities, creativity or individuality. Nor should you expect her to do this in order to conform to anyone's stereotyped "minister's or teacher's wife" role.

You and I have the God-given obligation also to care not only for our wives material and physical needs but also for their emotional and spiritual needs. We must recognize and give heed to what Holy Scripture says to us, "Ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered," I Peter 3:7. In order that our wives may not feel neglected, become frustrated, be driven to jealousy or nagging, it is up to us to fulfill our calling as devoted husband's by giving our spouse the attention, care, love, devotion, time and honor due her. Because of the press of our duties outside of our homes, we may expect our wives to shoulder most of the burdens of managing the household, serve as the church's or our own secretary-receptionist, provide an answering service, answer all questions and critics with quick, pertinent replies, be a whipping post when we come home after a rough, frustrating, irritating day, and be ready to offer us comfort and consolation to salve every wound. Even though she may have spent the day conversing with children or hearing hours of idle chatter while we have been conversing with and dealing with adults most of the day, we expect her to be quiet, not ask questions or ask about our day because we have far too important matters on our minds or because we would just welcome some peace and quiet. We can become far too demanding of our wives, forgetting the many responsibilities and obligations that are placed upon them in the home. The story is told, "At the doorway of the home as the family was leaving the wife turned to her husband and said, 'This time I'm going to go out and sit in the car and honk the horn while you put on the children's coats.'" It does call for sacrifice on our part. It will mean sacrificing a portion of our time and life from our office and calling. I refer not to the choice between answering the call to minister to a dying member or take your wife out to dinner or the children to the zoo. I refer to organizing your work in the study or for the classroom, planning your work schedule to accommodate your wife and family, making use of your time wisely so that important work is finished with dispatch and the unimportant is left for tomorrow, learning to delegate the endless little tasks to others in the congregation, who can perhaps do them even better than you, not letting yourself become bogged down every night with meetings that are not well attended or accomplish little or are held just for the sake of meeting. Barring the unexpected or emergencies, which do not happen that frequently, you and I should be able to arrange our work schedules and meetings so that our wives are not neglected. In fact many of our congregations' organization's meetings, special services, etc., are affairs which we may attend accompanied by our wives. If anyone in the family may be neglected more by us, they may be our children, who can be either too young to accompany us or too 'old' to want to accompany their parents.

I am of the opinion that it would be difficult to find many among us who neglect their ministries for their wives. Rather the opposite is true. Most of us feel guilty over neglecting wife and family. We feel uneasy even though we try to excuse ourselves because we are doing the Lord's work. This guilt should draw our attention to the contrast between the way things are and

the way they should be so that we might take the steps to close the gap. Guilt that leads to no action may indicate we're afraid to act or not ready to act to correct the situation. Often we let the press of duties give our consciences the desired sop and so shy away from the self-sacrifice to our wife and family which God wants us to give them.

William E. Hulme sums it up like this in "Your Pastor's Problems":

The minister needs the affection of his family as much as they need his. Most of the problems of the unhappy wife are cured by more love, time and affection from her husband. But before he can give or receive this affection his family members have to become ends in themselves and not means to an end. It is only as the minister gives up the egocentric need to have a. successful marriage and family for the sake of his professional reputation that he can begin to live and enjoy his family as values in themselves. His love for his wife as a woman rather than his right arm in his vocation helps to give her the identity she needs.^{iv}

Whether you want to be or should be, the fact still remains that you are the leaders, the authority figures, the head cheeses in the congregation or the school and your wives share in this status. "No man is an island." We need close friendships. Yet the ministry can be a very lonely vocation. We are surrounded by members yet isolated from making close friendships within the congregation. As our children grow, they will make close friendships with others of their own age from families within the congregation and we and our wives will be brought closer to those families. But I believe it to be disastrous to form close-knit friendships within the congregation because these can easily jeopardize the effectiveness of our callings as spiritual shepherds and counselors. Our ministries offer us the opportunities to be among others constantly and this helps take up the void created by a lack of close friendships within the congregation. Our wives, however, are first of all wives and mothers and have fewer opportunities to make or share mutual friendships within the congregation. Since church members provide the main social contacts outside of the home for most of our wives, they simply have few close friends, that is, they have no one with whom they can really "let down their hair." Not all wives experience this loneliness. Some may not feel the need for close-knit friendships or even avoid it. Some cope with it by apparently burying themselves in church activities. Others seek friendships outside of the congregation. Many continue in their loneliness. Yet, the problem can still be there. Your wife stands as a person surrounded by the congregation but almost exiled from close-knit friendship by reason of her being the pastor's or teacher's wife.

A solution to this problem for us and our wives might be our seeking close friendships outside the congregation. This, too, can be hazardous. I know of a brother in the ministry who did just that. He sought close-knit friendships among the professional people of his community and even became the president of the local country club which created a great amount of resentment in his congregation. Good judgment must be exercised in such matters.

There is another opportunity that our Lord provides within our congregations for making close friendships and that is among our co-workers. I know that this may be judged also as hazardous advice since we are warned that you shouldn't try to cement close-knit ties with the people with whom you work. But we have more in common than just our work and it need not be our pastoral or teaching ministries that draw us, our wives and families closer together. I believe that I have been in the ministry long enough and shared the experiences of others enough to lament the fact that there seems to be quite a "distance" between DMLC and our Seminary and not just in miles. This "distance" carries over into our ministries. It isn't unusual to find teachers

who feel antagonistic toward the pastor or the pastor toward the teacher or that one feels the other takes undue advantage or precedence over the other. There are unfortunate situations where pastor is pitted against teacher or teacher against pastor and their wives find themselves caught in between. Perhaps I may be judged as being naïve or idealistic in suggesting close friendships with co-workers within the congregation and my own situation may be rather unique but I do feel that this is one of the blessings of God in my own ministry and I feel that it could be of great advantage and blessing to you to make close-knit friendships among your co-workers. Another solution to the problem is that of making close-knit friendships with neighboring brethren and their families. Sometimes we complain that there is little time for this. But time for this is important and not wasted and when so spent proves also to be a blessing for us, our wives and our children. This offers our wives, especially, opportunities, for social contacts and sources for intimate friendships. Others have suggested that our wives be encouraged to make use of the opportunities to further their education by enrolling in classes at near-by universities or extension centers or colleges. When the children are grown, our wives may seek outside employment which offers them contacts for new friendships. Some women may become active in hospital auxiliaries, community and civic projects where volunteer, talented help is always needed and put to good use.

Your obligation to your wife? In Proverbs 31:10 a good wife is described as “far more precious than jewels.” Consider your wife a treasure given to you by a gracious and bountiful God. Love her, honor her, recognize her talents, appreciate her efforts. Always be considerate of her feelings. Express your love for her with tenderness and sincerity in some way every day. Never allow yourself to be careless where you ought to show the greatest tenderness and respect to her. If you have valid grounds for dissatisfaction speak to her so as to hurt her feelings as little as possible and do this when you are alone, not in the presence of your children, least of all in the presence of members or strangers, even in a “kidding way.” Even though you are ever so busy, lend a hand with the household tasks to the best of your abilities, for often in these matters we can be all thumbs and of little use, but let your wife know that you recognize and understand the demanding tasks that are required of her. Take the time to listen to her and express your love to her by giving her a definite portion of your undivided time, devotion, care and honor due her.

III. The minister of Christ and his obligations to his children.

Parenthood is an awesome and a tremendous responsibility. Some of us are humbled beforehand just contemplating the responsibility. Others are humbled in the process of being a parent. One is very foolish to take the obligations of parenthood nonchalantly. The Lord expects Christian parents to consider and face their motives for wanting children. These can be as shallow or even selfish as motives for not wanting them. God instituted marriage and along with it He instituted parenthood. Parenthood is to be considered by Christians as a divine institution. The Fourth Commandment reminds us of our God-given calling as parents when it impresses upon us that we are His representatives over our children. Children are also under divine obligation to respect, honor, love and obey their parents as God’s representatives. St. Paul writes, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Ephesians 6:1.

God’s Word speaks about parental responsibilities and obligations when the Lord God teaches us that children are gifts from Him (Psalm 127:3). He is telling us that He requires us to love, cherish and give them the affection, concern, care and training they need. Sometimes you and I may find that difficult. As one parent puts it, “All the books tell us that what our children need is love. But just when they most need my love, I find them most unlovable.”^v Since

children have and display the “old Adam,” God lays upon parents the obligations of disciplining their children, not to excess to crush the child or to mete it out unjustly or blind with anger, but to reprove and correct them (Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21). Dr. Martin Luther follows the advice given in Proverbs when he writes:

One should punish children and pupils in such a way that the apple always lies beside the rod.” Children have a need for authority and good order in the home and the Lord lays upon parents the obligations of holding and exercising that authority. (Proverbs 22: 6 and 15) Fifty years ago someone said, “Minding one’s children did not mean obeying them.” Along with discipline the Lord requires parents to offer their children leadership and guidance by word and example. Luther’s remarks on this obligation of parents are still timely: “Religious training of children is a sacred duty. Here again we are plagued by the miserable fact that no one perceives or heeds this truth. All live on as though God gave us children for our pleasure or amusement, as though He gave us servants to use, like a cow or an ass, for work only, or as though we were to live with our subordinates only to gratify our whims, ignoring them, as though what they learn or how they live were no concern of ours. No one wants to see that educating or training is the command of the Supreme Majesty, who will strictly call us to account and punish us for its neglect, or that the need to be seriously concerned about young people is so great. For if we want to have good and capable persons for both temporal and spiritual leadership, we must certainly spare no diligence, effort or cost in teaching and educating our children that they may be able to serve God and the world. We must think not only how we may amass money and possessions for them; for God can surely support them and make them rich without us, as He is doing every day. But He has given and entrusted children to us that we should train and govern them according to His will; otherwise He would have no need of father or mother. Let everyone know, therefore, that it is his duty, on peril of losing divine favor, to bring up his children above all things in the fear and knowledge of God and, if they are talented, to let them learn and study so that they may be of service wherever they are needed.

If this advice were put into practice, God would also richly bless us and give us grace to bring up the sort of people who might benefit the country and its inhabitants, likewise well-trained citizens, chaste and domestic women, who in turn might rear godly children and servants. Now think for yourself what deadly damage you are doing if you are negligent in this respect and fail on your part to train your child to usefulness and piety. Think how, in addition, you are bringing sin and wrath upon yourself and are thus earning hell by the neglect of your own children, even though you may be pious and holy in other respects. And because this commandment is being disregarded, God is punishing the world so terribly that there is no discipline, order or peace. We all complain of this state of affairs but fail to see that it is our fault. However, if we have children and subjects who are spoiled and disobedient, they are the products of our own training.^{vi}

Children need to be assured that they are part of the family unit to meet and satisfy their sense of belonging and being wanted. Their need also for accomplishment and contributions to the family’s life must be satisfied so they should be given the opportunities to fulfill desires for achievement. Nothing destroys a child’s confidence more than the feeling that his parents think he cannot do anything right. What your child thinks you think of him has a great influence on his

attitude toward himself. Your child needs to know and understand that he is loved and accepted for what he is, not for what you think he is or want him to be. Children are to be nurtured to grow to maturity and trained to develop self-reliance and confidence. Parents are prone to demand from their children what they cannot be themselves. In the Christian home where the weaknesses and failings of each member of the family are recognized and dealt with and God's mercy in Christ is evidenced in the spirit of forgiveness between husband and wife, parents and children, then, children will be taught and brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Christian parents will be careful to teach their children a God-pleasing purpose in their lives so that the fruits of Christian stewardship, prompted by Christ's love for them, will be found in their daily lives by the dedicating of their hearts, talents, abilities and time to their Savior.

We deal with spiritual things daily. We minister to the spiritual needs of our members and instruct their children in "the one thing needful." How tragic if we are not careful to carry out faithfully the calling God gives us to care for the spiritual training of our own children. We teach our congregational families to have family altars and daily devotions in their homes and instruct them carefully in the how's and why's, the do's and don't's of establishing family altars. Do we always put into practice in our own homes what we teach? Perhaps this is one of the greatest dangers of our vocations that while we care for the spiritual needs of others, we become less careful and vigilant about the spiritual needs of our own families. St. Paul's warning applies to us not only as providers but also as priests in our homes when he writes: "If any provide not for his own and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." I Timothy 5:8. It is not selfish for you to seek earnestly the salvation of your own families. If charity begins at home, so, most certainly, must the love of souls. Those who live under our roof have very special claims on us. Spurgeon said of this:

God has not reversed the laws of nature, but he has sanctified them by the rules of grace; it augurs nothing of selfishness that man should first seek to have his own kindred saved. I will give nothing for your love for the wide world, if you have not a special love for your own household. The rule of Paul may, with a little variation, be applied here; we are to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"; so we are to seek the good of all mankind, but especially of those who are of our own near kindred.. Let Abraham's prayer be for Ishmael, let Hannah pray for Samuel, let David plead for Absalom and Solomon, let Andrew first find his own brother Simon, and Eunice train her Timothy; they will be none the less large and prevalent in their pleadings for others, because they were mindful of those allied to them by ties of blood.^{vii}

None of us should need to be encouraged to care for the physical and material needs of our families. We should be encouraged to practice good stewardship by planning for their future or emergency needs. Few of us plan to die young, so often, we put off planning for needs that will arise if God sees fit to take us out of this life before our children are grown. Few of us will be able to build up estates or amass trust funds for such needs, yet we can place whatever resources God gives us beyond our necessary living expenses into insurance or invest in sound financial institutions or savings. We do have a special obligation to our wives and children to sit down and make such plans because in our vocations not only can our families suffer the loss of a husband and father but it means that they must move from their home, perhaps move to another place, find a new home or would have to rely upon the help and charity of relatives. Some of us may own property, others of us may own very few possessions of value, yet none of us should be without wills. I am mentioning this particularly for the sake of children. Today in the fast age in

which we live children could easily suffer the loss of both parents. If both parents have wills, both parents can decide and plan in advance who should be appointed as guardians and foster parents for their children. As God-fearing fathers all these obligations apply also to us.

The Lord expects you, brethren, to be “one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity: for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” I Timothy : 4-5 You and I share the common problems of fathers whose work leaves them little time or energy for creative family living. By nature we’re vocationally oriented and our family role is often secondary. This problem is usually compounded because our work demands a never-ending drain upon our time and strength. By the time we spend hours in the study or classroom, spend time in preparation or correcting papers or making study plans, spend time each day traveling to hospitals, making calls, spend evenings in meetings, there seems to be little time left for the family, especially our children. When we do get home, we look for and relish a little peace and quiet and rather subdued children. When the house rocks with noise or even the peculiar din that only children can make, you may find yourself running back to the study, bolting the door and seeking just a few more minutes to get away from it all. I believe it was a grandparent who said once, “Thank goodness we can’t have any children in our old age!” Yet the Lord seems to give to those of us who are younger the grit and stamina to unbolt the study door and to be able to unwind even among the chatter, noise and antics of never-ceasing questions plied by inquisitive children. This, too, is a sacrifice we must be ready to make. When St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I am made all things to all men,” I wonder if he had in mind a situation such as becoming a horse for some little cowboy to ride on when we are dog tired:

The temptation is always there because of the press of our duties to leave the greater burden and responsibility of raising and disciplining the children or caring for their many needs to your wife. God reminds us that it is impossible for us to shift or get out from under the responsibility which He places on us and all fathers and of which He reminds us that we should have our “children in subjection with all gravity.” Sometimes I am sure you feel as I do that if I can instill the fear of God in my children or as long as the children fear and obey me, I am meeting the Lord’s requirements so far as my fatherly authority toward my children is concerned. But this offers only a false satisfaction that while the children might show awe of me in my presence, they have no fear of being disobedient when they aren’t in my presence. When the Lord says, “Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”, (Ephesians 6:4), it means that their upbringing, training and rearing is to be done by myself as well as by my wife.

Sometimes we cringe to hear about preacher’s or teacher’s kids and what is said often is not complimentary. True, it’s difficult to raise children in a parsonage or teacherage in a normal way. The parsonage and teacherage family feels the pressure to be a special example in their conduct because they belong to the men who are to be examples by virtue of their profession. The concept of the pastor or teacher as a super, par-excellent example of piety can lead to an unhealthy differentiation between us and our members. This differentiation is passed on to our families and I am sure they often resent it. When this difference centers on us and our families, our family may feel that they are being “used” rather than loved and accepted by others for what they are. It’s quite common to find that our children are expected to be exceptional in all respects, especially in behavior, and if they do not measure up, they’re considered to be mediocre or of contemptible misbehavior. It can happen that our wife and children are easy targets for criticism. Can it be though, that often we seem to be overly sensitive about this and seem to have

an underlying fear that parishioners peek into parsonage and teacherage windows and judge us particularly by the behavior of our families? We want our family to be an asset and blessing to our ministry and when they expose us to criticism, aren't we ready to bellow and put the full blame on them? When problems do arise in our homes, problems with the training and raising of our children, especially in the teenage years, it seems that most of us fear to seek outside counseling, perhaps because this may cast a bad reflection upon our own ministries. Why should we fear that some stigma lies in seeking counseling regarding problems with our own children?

God has given us the obligation to provide for our children as early normal a Christian home life as possible. I think it would be helpful if there were some way to compare the average time a minister of Christ spends with his family with the time spent by other professional or community-minded men, not to overlook the laymen in our congregations who conscientiously devote many hours a week to affairs of the congregation, church council, boards or committees. Perhaps the minister of Christ could not be too far out of line. There is one situation which is particularly that of the parsonage or teacherage family. The father is always working on weekends, a time when most other families are able to let up and do things together. It was refreshing to read this answer which was given by a minister's wife on a questionnaire that was sent to clergymen's wives of the American Baptist Convention a number of years ago: "I think that most ministers are more of a "family man" than are the men of other professions. They have fewer hours at home with family, but ministers tend to make more of these hours. Ministers and their wives are lucky in that they work as a team much more than any other couple and for this reason are much closer to each other. In spite of being in demand I think ministers as a whole are with their families more than a great many men are. All executives, public figures and professional men have to spend much time outside of their homes as do ministers, and the families have to understand and be proud that their father is in demand." So our families have to be educated to the fact that we often have no choice but to be absent from the family dealing with some member's problems which we cannot even mention when we do get home. Once our family accepts this necessary duty of our calling they will complain less and show less resentment against father's work away from home. It shouldn't be that difficult to teach our family that it is also the love of Christ that constrains us and faithfulness to our callings and our Lord that sometimes keeps us away from them and requires sacrifices on their part. They can learn that this becomes a part of the Christian home life in the parsonage or teacherage.

The story is told of a toad who fell into a rut in the road and could not seem to hop out. He called to a passing toad to assist him. "If I help you," said the toad, "I may fall into the rut with you. Then there would simply be two of us who are trapped." So he hopped on. Later to his surprise he saw the trapped toad hopping down the road. "I thought you couldn't get out of that rut," he said. "I couldn't," said the toad, "but a big truck came along and I had to." Perhaps we need such a truck to come along to get us out of the rut we may be in. You and I need to recognize the ambivalence in our frequent lament that we can't find more time for our families. What we always put off due to the press of other demands, we either value lightly or are resisting. While it seems to one that he is a prisoner in these matters, the fact remains that the prisoner may be in love with his chains. It's time that we looked inward and searched our own hearts and lives carefully. If your complaint is that your congregation doesn't offer you a regular day off each week, perhaps, you have failed to stress the importance of a regular day off for your family and yourself. Sometimes congregations and church councils can be remiss in remembering this and it doesn't hurt to remind them of it or even make such a request. It takes discipline on our part to reserve one day in seven for our wives and family. Priorities should be

set in our ministries. There is a time to do our important work for our Lord and His kingdom and there is to be a time set aside for our God-given obligations to our families. This, too, is a part of our Christian life and stewardship as well as our calling as ministers of Christ and Christian husbands and fathers. Dr. John H.C. Fritz writes: “After all has been said, the prime and fundamental requisite is that the minister of Christ be a sincere Christian, who takes his work seriously and therefore does it in accordance with the ability which God gives him, being faithful in the discharge of his duties to his Lord and to his wife and family.”

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