**All in the Family**

*by Tom Roberts*

There is something especially beautiful to me to see an entire family worship God together.

When I was a young boy, I remember a man who worshiped with the church at home whose wife was a member of a denomination. Each week the family would leave home in separate cars, the man and wife going to different places of worship. Their daughter was pulled between the two.

My own father was not a Christian and he either remained in bed on Sunday morning while we all went to worship, or, as often was the case, expressed his displeasure at our going. The fact that he was not saved tore at our hearts and kept us from being a close family. There was a barrier there that was never removed and sin finally tore the family asunder.

It takes strength and character to keep a family together in Christ. There are strains and stresses that would pull it apart if possible. A husband has problems that are different from a wife's and understanding is required. And there must be a common bond that binds stronger than the stresses that would tear apart.

A family that has Christ as its center is stronger than a family without Him. I admire Joshua's attitude when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Joshua 24:15). I admire Cornelius who gathered his household together and said, "We are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord" (Acts 10:33).

Husbands and fathers have a special responsibility before the Lord. They are to be heads of their households and guide the family in the way it should go. When a man abdicates this place and fails to lead his family in God's way, he will have much to answer for in the Judgment. Men, are you facing up to your place of responsibility?

Women are often the strength in the family. Especially is this so when the men are not Christians. But even where men are Christians, it is often the woman who determines whether or not a family will be faithful. It is often left up to the wife to prepare breakfast, get the children ready, and do the multiple chores that are necessary if a family is to be able to attend. When a wife sleeps late, doesn't prepare, or doesn't want to attend, it is extremely difficult for the husband to get everything ready and leave. He can do it, but it is hard. Wives, are you helping or hindering your family in its service to God?

Children can make worship pleasant or a chore. If they are allowed to dominate a family with their whims and dislikes, an hour or two in worship becomes a battle. It is hard to get them ready and then wrestle with them when they had rather stay home and play. As children get older, sullenness can set in and a poor attitude can destroy any worshipful attitude. Young people must come to realize that they are spiritual as well as physical and it is wrong to spend all their time on purely physical pleasures. They must be taught to feed the soul. Young people, do you help matters at home by your attitude or are you part of the problem?

If you haven't been doing so let me encourage you to worship together as a family this Lord's Day. Read this article in the presence of the entire family and discuss your hindrances. If each of you will determine to put the Lord first, you can be closer to one another. Don't let the problems of life short-change your happiness, now or hereafter.

Husbands, wives, children: serve God as a family. Which member(s) of your family are you content to see drift into hell? Do you sit across the breakfast table from a loved one who is lost? Talk humbly and lovingly to him (her) about it. Let them know that your love for them won't let you sit idly by while they are lost. Do you have young people who are drifting away? Let them read this so they will know you care. Reach out. Fight. Don't give up. Don't stop caring. Shed some tears. Pray about it. Determine to remain faithful all alone if you have to, but let them know you don't want to. You want your family to be in the Lord's family.

Again, as a young boy, I remember the first Bible class teacher I had, long before I became a Christian. She was faithful but her husband was not a Christian. Year after year, she taught class and lived as she should, teaching her children until they all became Christians. It took over thirty years, but she lived to see the day her husband became a Christian. Thirty years means somewhere in excess of 1,500 - 1,600 Lord's Days when she went to worship without her husband. But she lived to see him baptized into Christ. And that is what she wanted all along. Do you want it badly enough to do the same?

## Young Parents, Don't Be Discouraged

by Foy Short

You aren't able to enter into the worship. Just when you focus on the song and begin to feel some spiritual responsiveness, 18-month-old Missy bangs her head on the back of the pew, and her cries rise in crescendo above the singing. Or you have just begun to grasp his line of reasoning as the preacher expounds on a difficult verse, when 3-year-old Johnny tugs at your sleeve and insists in loud whispers that he had to go to the restroom. The ways in which children can distract your attention and break your concentration are endless.

Sometimes you feel there is no purpose in being at the church services while trying to cope with children. You feel you are getting nothing out of services and the kids are probably distracting others, so why take them? Why not stay home so that you, the children, and others will all be happier? Your feelings are perfectly understandable. You do have a problem. But don't be discouraged. In reality you have a great opportunity. If you act wisely, you have the power to accomplish wonderful objectives.

1. You can implant in your children the habit of attending services, thereby opening the way for them to learn about God as they grow. This may very well mean all the difference between their becoming faithful Christians or going the destructive way of the world.

2. Though you may not be learning much from the sermons, you are learning thoroughly practical lessons in patience, self-control, self-denial, perseverance, discipline, and obedience to God. These lessons are the kind best learned under the pressures of hindrances and obstacles.

3. You are teaching others. By faithful attendance and courage, you are setting a wonderful example to the whole congregation. Such an example is a priceless asset to any church. It is more powerful in influencing the lives of others than many sermons. A church cannot have too many young mothers and fathers of this kind. We need you all! We want you all!

So, young parents, don't be discouraged. Keep coming. Bring the children. Most of us have been through the same experiences and we understand your difficulties. We respect your concern for others. We admire your fortitude in coming. We want your fellowship in worship. We need your help in teaching the church. So keep bringing the little ones to services.