

Christian, Love Your Lost Family

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I want to read a quote from Hiebert. Christian love does not undervalue or disregard natural family ties. It gives them their due importance, and condemns those who are without natural affection.

Now what does he mean by that? He means this. He's giving a reference basically to the super-spiritual - those who are now Christian, they belong to a certain church. Maybe a very exclusive kind of church, and because of that, they no longer give any due respect or any regard for their natural relationships in this world that are also ordained by God. That is, they neglect their physical families - immediate or extended, and they withdraw from the unbelieving world.

So when we talk about our special love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not approving that kind of attitude, here in this church. And I want to make this clear. Why? Because of certain things that have happened recently. We've had to deal with kind of some strange groups that have been teaching strange things, and we've had to help people, and correct people in this matter.

But also I want you to realize there's a text in the Bible that the cults use, or misuse. They distort, and they do it in order to isolate their members from their natural families. And I want to just give you that text. It's in Luke 14:26 Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." Now you see how certain cults, exclusive groups could use this to separate people from their families, or from the unbelieving world. Now, Jesus is not promoting hatred within the context of the natural family, not at all. Jesus is not promoting hatred toward the unbelieving world, or isolation from it.

Paul made it very clear that all though we're not of the world, we are in this world. Jesus is not doing these types of things, because if he was, He would be contradicting the law of God from which He said not one jot or tittle would ever pass away.

So what is Jesus doing? He's giving us a hyperbole. Exaggerated speech, in order to press upon us a point. And what is that point? That supreme loyalty is due Him, even at the cost sometimes of the closest human relationships that we have. But he's talking about also the fundamentals of who He is and what it means to be a Christian. He's not necessarily talking about these people who will draw other people into their congregation, as though they're the only congregation on the planet, and separate them from everyone else.

Now, I want to say this. Whenever possible, as far as it concerns you and me, whenever it is possible, we should do everything in our power to maintain the best relationships possible with those outside the church. Especially our own family. Our fathers, our mothers, our brothers, and our sisters. And we should seek to maintain, as much as we can, relationships with people in the unbelieving world. Of course we should, but let me say this also: In those relationships, although we are to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, when the opportunity arises, when God opens the door. And we are to definitely live the Christian life before the unbelieving world without compromise.

Yet at the same time, God has not caused you or called you to be ethics sheriff. Do you understand me? He's not called you to go around correcting the entire unbelieving world. Your rules are not going to help them, especially the ones that are your inferences, and don't really come out of Scripture. They don't need ethical training. They need the gospel of Jesus Christ, do you see that? And they need to see it lived out in you my friend.

And what does that mean? Yes, speak the truth. But not a condemning voice every time you enter into a conversation with the unbelieving world. Not nitpicking them every time you see them do something wrong. But showing compassion, love, grace, graciousness. Love covering a multitude of sins, and yes even you, in your holiness, bearing with their sin when they speak wrongly before you. It doesn't mean every time you're supposed to correct them, but maybe you should just bear it. I know it hurts. But it is compassion, it's kindness, and it's the gospel, gospel, gospel. We must Gospelize our families, we must Gospelize people. Now that I've said that, I hope you understand it.