

Either You're Serious, Or You're Not



By Rob Pue

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In my work, I do a fair amount of counseling with individuals, couples and families dealing with some very troubling issues in their lives. I also do pre-marital counseling when I'm asked to perform a wedding ceremony. This type of work was never in my plan for ministry, but God had other ideas, and it seems He's called me to provide counsel more and more often lately. As people read our nationally-distributed Christian newspaper, hear my commentaries on the radio or watch our weekly TV program, many have sought me out with questions, to ask for prayer and to seek counsel.

In this message, I don't intend to betray any confidential information and certainly won't be mentioning any names. The issues I speak of may relate to you or someone you know, but understand that I'm talking about the most serious issues people contact me about in a general way, and not any specific person.

The troubles people are struggling with today are many, as they try to navigate through this sinful, fallen world the best they're able. Many people are living in unbearable circumstances, and have been for a very long time and things have not gotten any better for them. There are troubled marriages, people struggling with being unequally yoked with an unbelieving spouse, there are situations where children, raised in Christian homes, have fallen away from their faith

and embraced all the sin and wickedness of worldly enticements. In many of these cases, the parents suffer terrible emotional turmoil, as they watch their children head full-speed down the highway to hell.

Worse yet, in many of these situations, the children want nothing to do with their parents anymore, and they've totally cut them out of their lives. The kids don't acknowledge their parents' birthdays, anniversaries or even Mothers' or Fathers' Day. Most rarely communicate with their parents, and some not at all.

Even more heartbreaking for these parents is when their children don't even allow them to see or have a relationship with their precious grandchildren. Perhaps you can't relate to this because it sounds so very dysfunctional. Make no mistake: it *is* very dysfunctional, and not at all healthy, yet it's becoming more and more common every day.

God's plan for marriage and family is one man united with one woman for a lifetime. This is the foundation of the natural family. Out of this union, should come many children. Through the trials and tribulations of life, no matter what may come, the husband and wife have vowed to remain together, "'til death do we part." Interestingly, divorce rates have actually fallen in recent years, but I dare say there are more unhappy marriages being reported to me now than ever before. These couples may still be living together and married, but they are definitely not happily married.

God's plan also includes both the father and mother actively raising their children in an intact, Godly home, teaching the precepts of our Creator, our Heavenly Father to their little ones, from the youngest of ages. But you can't teach what you don't know, and sadly, we're now two, if not three generations beyond when most people had a genuine fear of the Lord and a real relationship with God the Father. The "seeker friendly" church movement began long before it became something that was

recognized and labeled. Church teachings have been watered down so as to be non-offensive and therefore, ineffective in training up Godly disciples.

For decades, parents have been taught by the church to leave the spiritual training of their kids to the “professionals,” and so, while most Christian couples may faithfully attend church, they turned the training up of their children over to Sunday School teachers and so-called “Childrens’ Church” and the Youth Groups. In these programs, if there’s a curriculum at all, it’s “church-lite, even lighter than the cotton candy they dish out to the adults – absolutely useless “teaching” as they tell the kids Bible “stories.” The teachers, usually parents who volunteer for these jobs with no training whatsoever, are themselves unable to teach what they’ve never learned, and will simply tell a quick story, then hand out a snack and a page to color with crayons and just try to make it through until the end of the service when the parents come to pick the kids up.

What have these children learned? Fairy tales. Instead of teaching God’s Word as HISTORY, they’ve been taught “stories,” been given a snack and a time-wasting “craft” project to do. There is very little, if any, truth taught. And this – an hour of this once a week – has become the extent of the “spiritual training” that most churches provide today. Unfortunately, this model has been going on for decades. It’s “Happy Fun Time” for the kids, but they’re definitely not getting trained as young disciples of Christ. Nothing of relevance is taught; they know nothing about the spiritual warfare they’ll face in the real world, and nothing of the power of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Then they spend 40 hours a week in the public schools, where all the “fairy tale” stories they’ve heard in Childrens’ Church are dispelled as nonsense and superstition and what little they heard about God is replaced with things like evolution, sex education, “social justice” and atheism. The

parents, grossly inept at spiritual guidance themselves, then wonder what happened, when their ten-year-old son decides he wants to be a girl; or their 14-year-old daughter becomes pregnant; or their kids end up addicted to drugs, swearing like the devil with every sentence they speak, and seeking out foul-mouthed “rap stars” as their heroes and role models.

“What in the world happened? After all, we took them to church every week!” Yeah, there’s your answer. You left the spiritual training to a system where there was never any spiritual “meat” fed to them, and biblical history was taught as fairy tales and then when they went home, they observed their parents living no differently from their worldly, unsaved neighbors. Yes, I know, SOME parents are true disciples and followers of Christ and their lives show it and their kids know it. But these cases are definitely rare.

It’s a far cry from what Moses commanded the people in Deuteronomy 6: *“These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”* These words Moses spoke were the commands of God Almighty, and nothing was or is more important. But how seriously do we take this admonition today? In most homes – even most Christian homes – God is never even mentioned and His Word is never even opened, much less made a priority, studied and read as a family on a regular basis. And we wonder what in the world has happened to our families.

We all know the verse, *“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* Today so many wonder why their child has become a heathen, an atheist, an anarchist and a God-hater. If you hear nothing else of what I’m telling you today, understand this: there is NO SUBSTITUTE for genuine Christianity. Calling yourself a

Christian while living like the world and having no time for God but plenty of time for hobbies, parties, vacations, television, and Facebook is nothing short of taking the Lord's name in vain. Our kids watch everything we do. If the things of God are totally unimportant and irrelevant to us in our daily lives, never lived out in the home, and mocked and ridiculed in their public school, movies, music and everywhere else, what conclusion would you expect the kids to arrive at? *"Train up a child in the way he should go..."* YOU have to do that. You can't delegate that most vital responsibility to anyone else. It's up to you. So if you're wondering what has happened to your kids and grandkids, there – most likely – is your answer.

I'm also often called upon for prayer and counseling for troubled marriages. This is much more common than one might think, and once again, even in so-called "Christian" homes. I hear from people where the husband and wife have slept in separate beds, and even separate parts of the house, for years. I hear from wives whose husbands won't even sit at the same table with them for a meal – they just grab something from the fridge and eat on the couch while watching TV. There are many, both men and women, now addicted to pornography, since it's become so readily and easily available on the internet and smart phones. Rather than a loving, intimate bond with their spouse, it's simply easier to view sex acts online and live a fantasy life while building emotional walls that separate them from their spouse.

What's happened to these couples? Obviously, there was a time when they were deeply in love, when the husband would do anything to court the girl, serve her, impress her, be a gentleman to her, and try his hardest to win her attention and eventually her hand in marriage. Obviously there was a time when they walked down the aisle together and made vows before God to love and serve one another's needs for life. In good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for richer or

poorer, as long as they both should live. It wasn't that long ago... but now, they're two separate people living under the same roof, and can't seem to say a pleasant word to one another, sometimes for weeks on end. In some cases, it's been years.

Once again, while they may have had a "Church Wedding," those who struggle with these matters often have no real relationship with the Lord. They don't pray together, study the Word together or minister to others together. Jesus stands at the door and knocks at these homes, but Facebook, TV, hobbies and games take priority.

Most times there's a great deal of selfishness going on in these homes. As the hurt gets worse and the hearts grow harder, it becomes more difficult for the husband and wife to genuinely care and serve one another. The importance of a heart of humility and service is repeatedly emphasized all throughout Scripture. Think of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. He told them, *"whoever wishes to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven will be the servant of all."*

Some of you men may get angry with me for saying this, but I lay most of the responsibility for all these matters directly on your shoulders. Certainly it takes both spouses to make a Godly marriage and family. But God has called us men to be the spiritual leaders of our homes. Yet how many of us have grown up in homes where "Mom" was the one who tucked us in with bedtime prayers, who took us to church, who read us the Scriptures and modeled her faith in real life for us – while "Dad" pursued his work, his hobbies and recreation?

God also told us all, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her."* In my counseling, I often ask men who claim to love their wives if they would give themselves up for her. Would they lay down their lives for her? *"Absolutely,"* they respond, without a moment's hesitation.

Then I ask, *“But are you willing to lay down the porn, the alcohol, the fishing, the TV remote, the Facebook... are you willing to lay those things down for her? Do you think you even can?”* I get a blank stare.

There are many troubled people, troubled marriages, dysfunctional families, broken homes, wayward children, grandparents in anguish because their grandchildren are growing up estranged from them and in Godless, secular homes. Friends, the only answer to all these things is humble repentance and turning once again – or for some, for the very first time – to God our Father and Creator, and Jesus His Son. The Christian life is not one of ease, but the alternative, as we see so often now from the seeds we’ve sown, is pure anguish. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you. Pray without ceasing. Do what you know is right, and start making your professed faith a real, true priority in your lives today. There’s no other way, no magic pill, no quick fix. Either you’re serious, or you’re not.

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