

# *The Patriarch's Teaching Responsibility*

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

**I**t is the responsibility of the patriarch to teach his family the Scriptures. No one else has been given this responsibility. It is a responsibility that he cannot delegate to others. He is the divinely appointed head of the home, and he alone is responsible for the spiritual welfare of those under his headship. This is a God-given responsibility that cannot be surrendered to anyone. This is a serious matter before God.

This, by the way, relates directly to the truth of “the church in thy house.” A home, with extended family and guests, led in ministry by the head of that home – the husband and father. As a general principle, other family men may from time to time be there – ideally on a temporary learning basis, until they too can or will take on their own God-given family responsibility.

The primary teaching place is home. That is the standard of Scripture.

*“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).*

*“... The father to the children shall make known Thy truth” (Isaiah 38:19b).*

*“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).*

*“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).*

*“And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home ...” (I Corinthians 14:35).*

James Wesley Stivers writes concerning the truth of these verses,

“Can a ‘pastor’ do this for your family? Can your child’s Sunday School teacher? No. It is impossible. What God is describing in this text is a live-in spiritual tutor. One must live with the person he is discipling [training]. Jesus lived with his twelve disciples for three years. They ate and slept in His presence ... All this talk about church discipleship is fantasy. So is the concept of home cell groups. These are phony substitutes.

“There seems to be something lost in a relationship between a parent and a child, if it is the decision of the parent to commission a third party to provide biblical instruction and spiritual nurture to the child in his stead. I argue that it is a dereliction of duty ... Parents are to disciple their children. It is an immutable part of the vocation of parenthood.

### **Stuck in Weekly Religious Tradition**

“We naturally suppose that the ‘institutional church’ is the primary agent in proclaiming the Gospel and teaching the Word of God. That is the primary role assigned to the ‘church’ in our day. But it has not always been so. In early America, as it was in the earliest church, the Christian home was the spiritual center ...

“It is impossible to provide the basis for Christian character and spiritual experience in one or two hours a week. Constant contact with a Christian leader is necessary. That is why the ‘discipleship movement’ was so popular in recent years. It recognized the inadequacy of the ‘institutional church’ to provide even the basic spiritual foundations in a persons life ...

“Some people believe, as I was prone at one time, that if one wishes to do anything for God, one must do it within the confines of the ‘church’ apparatus – that God’s work is done primarily at ‘church.’ Actually, ... the family is the chief agent for the passing-on of the Christian faith from generation to generation ...

“Even the work of evangelism, once thought to be the principle purpose of the pulpit preacher, is better done through the home. The most effective evangelist, as many men and women with tender emotion admit, is that of a godly mother or father. Better than three-fourths of all conversions come through the work of family and friends ...

“It is a personal faith which must be transmitted, not an abstract and institutional one.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. James Wesley Stivers, *Restoring the Foundations*, 1995, pages 5, 6, 45, 46.

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