

Your Home in the Church

1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

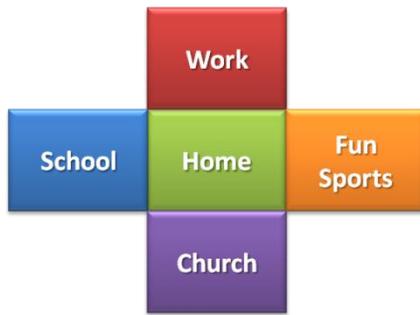
Russ Kennedy

Introduction When I say "church", what pops into your mind? *Get responses from congregation*

- Building?
- Programs and places?
- People?
- Some or all of the above?

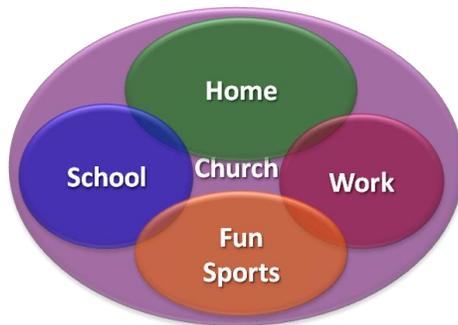
Which if these best represents how you think about the church?

Elements: home, work, school, recreation (clubs, teams, etc), church



Here is the too common view in the world and among Christians – different areas of life as compartments with the home as the center of it all. This is an Old Covenant view of the home that does not understand a very important New Covenant shift.

Here is a helpful correction that we have offered in years past. Since the church is at the center of God’s purposes and plans it should be the sun and center of our own universe. It has been a useful and helpful model, but still does not fully represent what the Scriptures say.



The fulfillment of several Old Covenant themes is the household of God, the church who are the people of God. Even our relationships as husband and wives are “in the Lord” as joint-heirs of grace and members of His body. All of the Christian life is lived “in the church”.

So, this evening, we are going to discuss your home in the church.

Now, let's think about the very helpful message this morning from 1 Timothy 3:14–16 (ESV).

¹⁴ I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. ¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Timothy is receiving instruction for all on *how to behave in all of life*. From Paul through Timothy, here is how to walk with God, to be pleasing to God and to understand God's agenda.

This all-of-life behavior is *in God's household, the church*. The church is defined as the culmination of the canonical/Biblical theology of God's house. But the church is also identified by a confession of truth summarized in a poem. So God's house are a household of confessing people – people who believe, confess and defend the truth.

We are *motivated to godly living by the graces and glories of our Savior and Sovereign*. Who Christ is, what He has done for us, how He rules over us all move us to what He calls us to be and do.

So here is the radical New Covenant theology of the home:

Your home exists within the household of God, the church, the confessional people of God.

What does this mean? Well, I want to think about that together. I want a lot of this to be discussion and diagnostic. We are going to talk together about this framed by a text. We will engage some questions that will help us focus on how we can work this out in our own homes.

Framed by the Scripture

⁹ For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. ¹¹ For you know how, like a father with his children, ¹² we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. 1 Thessalonians 2:9–12 (ESV)

An Account

Paul reminds them of their history together. It is a history of conduct and care in a relationship. He wants them to remember that he set an example of “household of God” centric living.

He had worked hard in his vocation in order to carry his own financial burdens. He had chosen to work hard in the world so that they would be freed from the burden of financially supporting him.

He had worked hard in his gospel ministry among them. He had preached the gospel to them. His work in the world was not a distraction to his work in the Word. It seems too that he never used his work in the Word to excuse inattention and inactivity in his vocation.

An Analogy

Ah, what a wonderful analogy full of Biblical themes and personal warmth. He was with them like a father with his children. So he connects his work among them with God as the Father of their household. He connects it to the long and lovely theme of God’s care and chastening of His people. Because of what follows, the emphasis is on the strength and sternness of his fatherly manner with them.

Our Actions

In what he did he illustrated what is needed. In his conduct with them, he had been righteous, holy and blameless. In his work and words, he pleased God. He pleased God for or because he had done it like a father with his kids. So, as a father is with his children so we are to in God’s household.

Motivation – to stir up

Three verbs describe what was done to motivate people. As a loving father he did more than just instruction and teaching. He not only pointed them to the path they were to walk, but followed up with strong words to press them to walk that path. He used exhortation which not only lays out clear steps of action but also shapes their wants and desires so that they will be moved to do. He uses encouragement to lift up and press forward the downcast and faltering. He charges them – what a strong word. He gets them to commit to what they ought to do. He is insistent that this is not only what they ought to do, but what they will do.

Measure – to set the standard

These strong words are to get them to walk in a manner that is worthy of God. The standard he has set is to be pleasing to the Lord. As a loving father,

he motivates them to live up to the family name, character and conduct. This is so central in our households of faith. We must be willing to measure up, to be worthy of Christ. I understand that we are made worthy by an act of God's grace in Christ. But this text makes no sense if there is not a sense in which we are also to walk, to live in our everyday lives, worthy of God. Consider two other texts that use the same form, both from Ephesians:

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [Ephesians 4:1 (ESV)]

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. Ephesians 4:17 (ESV)

In the household of the church, the people of God, leaders, like loving fathers will exhort, encourage and charge people to walk worthy of God.

Our Aim

Why does this matter? Why take the relational risks to do this? Because of what God has called us to. Think here in terms of what we are summoned to or enlisted in. *Illustration*: advertisements for the United States Marines – the motivation to measure up is because of who they are becoming and they are identified with. The few, the proud, the Marines.

For us, we are motivated to measure up because we are enlisted, summoned or:

Called as members of God's kingdom

A whole other set of themes and truths are invoked with this word, “kingdom”. Our membership in God's kingdom aims our God-pleasing walk. In order to fully understand our relationship to God and to one another, we need all the analogies God uses. The church is a bride, a family, a kingdom, a people (or nation) and a flock. Our walk with God and with one another will be worthy of Him as we live as people in His household and His kingdom.

Called to magnify God's glory

What a great aim – we are enlisted to be involved in God's glory. We are called to point to it, to highlight it, to magnify it. Because Christ shows the Supreme worth, weight and brightness of God, we are called to do so in our own walk and words.

Two important items for our thinking tonight.

One of our responsibilities is to motivate you to be pleasing to God. Part of that is in personal and practical steps of action aimed at helping you to be ever more pleasing to God.

We have to understand that it does matter. God has called us to participation in His kingdom and His glory.

Focused in our Homes

Well, we usually associate "church" with building. When we hear that the church ought to be central or first or a priority, too many people are thinking in terms of services and public corporate gatherings in buildings.

Illustration from German

Kirche refers to the place God's people meet

Gemeinde refers to the people of God

When the meeting at the Kirche is over the Gemeinde go home.

So, tonight we are not going to talking primarily about how to make your home centered on 2738 Pennyroyal Road, as important as that is - but how you make put your home life in the center of God's people.

The Bible locates a Christian's home as being among God's gathered people. Thus, the focus in our homes will be first on people and then on programs and places. We are going to go about this not through my talking to you but by our engaging with some questions.

Areas of concern for development

Hospitality

Discuss: What is Christian hospitality?

Do you have an open heart to people?

Do you teach your children to enjoy having people?

Do you teach your children to engage people in the home?

Evangelism

Discuss: Should we use our homes for evangelism?

Do your neighbors know you are a Christian?

Do your children's friends know you are a Christian?

Have you ever talked to your neighbors in your home about the gospel?

Mercy and Compassionate Care

Discuss: What is the Christian home's responsibility for taking care of the needs of others?

Do you know if your neighbors are doing OK?

What did you do to help your neighbors during the hurricane over a year ago?

Do you teach your children to care for the physical needs of neighbors?

Do you talk to them about what you do in benevolence for brothers and sisters (may be wise not to mention names in doing so).

Gathering with God's people

Discuss: What are all the ways in which we have chosen to meet together as God's people?

General

Do you gather with God's people with a grudging or a glad heart?

With your children or with others, are you critical of the church in areas of preferences?

Do you encourage your children to participate and engage in the gatherings?

Flock - in small groups

Do you participate in you flock meetings?

Do you encourage your children to look forward to flock meetings?

Do you teach you children how to behave in small group meetings?

Community - in station of life

Do you participate in the groups organized along the lines of men's group, women's groups, youth, etc?

Would it be a benefit to parents with young children to have older couples in the church poised and prepared to baby-sit during activities?

Can you open your home to youth or other activities?

Corporate - with the church as a whole

Do you organize your schedule to prioritize on attending services?

Do you give as much attention to preparation for services as you do to preparing your children for school?

Do you participate in the services: singing, listening, giving, taking notes, fellowshiping?

Do you require your children – and I mean, even your younger children – to pay attention and participate at their level?

Three final exhortations to you:

Adjust your theology of the home to align with the Scriptures. Your whole life as a believer, including in your home, exists in Christ, in the Lord, in God's truth-confessing people.

Evaluate your priorities and change your schedules to reflect a life worthy of God in and among His people.

Seek to pursue God's agenda for your good and His glory, in your home, within the greater household of God.