

# CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF “THE WAY”

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## 7 Signs We May Be Worshipping Our Family

by Jason Helopoulos

I love my family. I love being a husband. We celebrate sixteen years of marriage this week and I can't imagine living life with anyone else. I love being a father. I have two kids that delight my soul. I can't wait to see them in the morning before I head off to the church and I am always anxious to see them in the evening when I return. There are few things I enjoy more in this life than being a father. I love my family. However, having said that, I want to be on guard against loving them inordinately. . . . If we aren't careful, instead of encouraging worshipping families, we become family worshippers. The following are *possible* signs that we have begun worshipping the family rather than encouraging our family to be worshippers:

**We Seldom Host Others:** If our home is seen *primarily* as a citadel set against the world, there is a problem. A home centered upon Christ will be marked by growing hospitality. It is a way station of truth and worship. We gladly invite others into it for rest, encouragement, and strengthening.

**We Seldom Reach Out to Others:** If our family is so insular that others don't know us, there is a problem. A Christian family filled with love and worship should overflow to those around them. Neighbors and co-workers can't help but be touched by the love that permeates in and cascades from our family.

**We Seldom Serve in the Church:** If our family is so focused on just being a family that we can't attend mid-week bible studies or are so intent on being together Sunday morning that the parents can't teach Sunday School or assist in the nursery, there is a problem. As a Christian family we are to see ourselves as part of the community. Not separate from it. Not more important than it. But essential to it.

**We Seldom Have Time:** If our family is always busy with its own activities, whether soccer, piano, ballet, family vacations, or even family worship to the point that we have little time for others, there is a problem. The enrichment and growth of our children, even in spiritual things, is not to pull us away from people but towards them. Yes, we only have so many years to train and teach our children while they are at home. But are we teaching them that they and their activities are the center of life or worshipping Christ and loving others is what is most important?

**We Seldom Sacrifice:** If our family is reluctant to give generously, because of what it costs our family, there is a problem. We hesitate to give above our tithe to missionaries, the local church, the building fund, or the homeless shelter because our children's college education comes first. We neglect supporting the church member headed out on a short-term mission's trip, because our family "educational trip" is more important. We always have an excuse. And it is always our family's need that provides the ground for that excuse. Rather, the Christian family should be generous in giving—generous to the point of giving sacrificially.

**We Seldom Have Flexibility:** If others feel like they are always interrupting our family by calling, visiting, or proposing a time to get-together, there is a problem. Others will notice it before us. They begin to feel like our family's routine cannot be interrupted under any circumstances. We convey this consciously or even subconsciously and others pickup on it. Rather, our family should be noted by its flexibility and joy when others stop by, friendliness when called, and availability when needed.

**We Seldom Speak Well of Others:** If our family tends to have an arrogant air about it, there is a problem. We have it together. Others don't quite understand the importance of the family, worship, and our calling as parents. Our conversations are too often critical and judgmental. If only others understood as we do. May it never be! Our families should be filled with thanking God for others. Our children should hear us commending and promoting others. People should find that we are refreshing to their souls, rather than critical of their practices.

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## Community is Costly Business

by David McLemore

Gospel doctrine creates gospel culture. As the gospel message goes out, a community around Jesus Christ is formed. When God joins his word with his people, he gives power to the church as an outpost of the kingdom of heaven. Ray Ortlund puts it simply:

Gospel doctrine	- gospel culture	= hypocrisy
Gospel culture	- gospel doctrine	= fragility
Gospel doctrine	+ gospel culture	= power

Of the two, gospel doctrine is easier. It's easier to learn the words than to be formed by them. It's easier to recite the message than to reconcile to your brother. But both are needed. When gospel doctrine is joined with gospel culture, God's power shines forth. Francis Schaeffer understood this as well. In his book, *The Church At the End of the Twentieth Century*, he explains the power of L'Abri:

It's a costly business to have a sense of community. L'Abri cannot be explained merely by the clear doctrine that is preached; it cannot be explained by the fact that God has been giving intellectual answers to intellectual questions. I think those two things are important, but L'Abri cannot be explained if you remove the third. And that is, there has been some community here. And it has been costly.

In about the first three years of L'Abri, all our wedding presents were wiped out. Our sheets were torn. Holes were burned in our rugs. Indeed once a whole curtain almost burned up from somebody smoking in our living room. Blacks came to our table. Orientals came to our table. Everybody came to our table. What happened at L'Abri could not have happened any other way.

You see, you don't need a big program. You don't have to convince your session or board. All you have to do is open your home and begin. And there is no place in God's world where there are no people who will come and share a home as long as it is a real home...

If you have been married for years and years and had a home or even a room and none of this has ever occurred, if you have been quiet especially as our culture is crumbling around us, if this is so - do you really believe that people are going to hell? And if you really believe that, how can you stand and say, "I have never paid the price to open my living space and do the things that I can do on my own level?"

I have a question about in my mind about us as evangelicals. We fight the liberals when they say there is no hell. But do we really believe people are going to hell?  
Community is a costly business, but someone must pay the cost. Why not you? Why not me? If we want to make a big impact on our world, why not get in the risky business of building community? Why not take the gospel seriously enough to let it impact the way we relate to one another? Why not reach out to reconcile? Why not open up your home to welcome? Why not rearrange your schedule to be free for those who need friendships?

What could God do if we chose to reach out beyond social media to the real persons behind the avatars? It would be costlier, yes, but it would be more beautiful and more satisfying. And, in the end, it may be the thing that God uses to bring revival.