

worse than that — what if they associate God the Father with a “live-in” abuser who, from *their* perspective, does *nothing* but give them snakes and scorpions?

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children.....²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—³⁰for we are members of his body.³¹For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.³²This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church.³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” (Eph. 5:1 and 22-33 NIV).

Even one’s understanding of the Church itself is *closely* tied to the husband/wife relationship within the home. Without a loving father/mother family in the home, understanding the Christ/Church relationship is incomplete, at best.

If we as Christians *willingly* avoid teaching the truth about the physical family as God has prescribed it should be, we have first of all failed to declare the whole counsel of God and secondly, we have handicapped ourselves in our ability to help future generations overcome the shortcomings we face in our society today. Failing to teach our young people about the pattern God *expects* His children to follow for the family will only multiply the problems we are already experiencing. The broken homes, blended family homes, single parent homes, alternative family homes and the abuses prevalent *because* of so *many* of these situations will only increase as the years go by. Our only hope of reversing some of the problems in a society that is generating headlines like those we read earlier, will come from *our* ability to admit to our own children and young people that we have made some serious mistakes and pray that they will not do the same. God clearly revealed a *pattern* to follow for the families of His children. It is our charge to be sure that our children *know* what that pattern is so *they* can follow it — even if some in the church today have failed to do so. Let us *never* shirk from declaring the whole counsel of God — especially to our *own* children.

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DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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A Cure

Everyday, it seems we hear more and more news stories of people abusing other people in one way or another. Many of those stories involve children being abused by adults while others are cases of adult against adult abuse. There is an epidemic of women and children being abused in numbers far greater than seen in years gone by. We marvel at how cruel people can be toward others and wonder how we can have any impact on this plight that is becoming more and more prevalent with each passing day. Some of the recent headlines that come to mind are —

- *“Man accused of raping girlfriend’s 10 year old daughter — crime results in 11 year old giving birth to 4 pound baby girl.”*
- *“Expectant mother killed as child is cut out of her and taken.”*
- *“Three year old child dies after sexual abuse and rape by mother’s boyfriend.”*
- *“Fifteen year old boy sexually molested by his teacher.”*

We read these kinds of headlines with amazement and wonder *how* it can happen. Is there anything *we* can do to slow this acceleration of abuse in our society?

The first thing we can do is identify a common thread that runs through a large percentage of these incidences. There is one factor that is common to *all* of these cases. That common thread is the absence of a Godly household. Well, duh! *That* would *seem* to be rather *obvious*! Except —

“What about the Mary Winkler case?” Remember? That was the wife of the Church of Christ minister in Selmer, Tennessee who killed her husband Matthew, and fled with their three children. (She was eventually arrested and convicted of voluntary manslaughter — served some time in jail and a mental health facility — and is now in a custody battle for the children with the parents of her deceased husband). Even in that case — as the trial progressed, we learned of *numerous* problems in that home. Various news sources reported that testimony during the trial indicated there had been instances of emotional, physical, verbal, and sexual abuse as well as child abuse in the home. There was also testimony that Mary Winkler had an on-line gambling problem and was involved with a foreign fraudulent check writing scheme. It’s easy to see that if any of those activities were common in that home, it was *not* a Godly household no matter *what* image was portrayed publicly. The household obviously fell way short of adhering to *Godly* standards.

Churches — and all of us who are in their fellowship, need to take a *careful* look at exactly what the standards are that make up a home that falls within the standards

continued on page 2

established by God. We must then begin to *return* to that standard instead of allowing the secular society to dictate, permit and encourage a *sub*-standard criteria. Accepting as “normal” those standards set by the *secular* world *instead* of those set by *God*, is the root cause of much of the abuse seen in families as well as in society today. The *only* standard that is consistently set by the *secular* society is one of tolerance of *any and all* lifestyles and “family” structures — *even* those clearly forbidden by God as well as those outside of the *pattern* established by Him. To boldly advocate that such a societal standard is *not acceptable* will gain the label of being a “right wing religious radical” who wants everyone to conform to his or her way of living. Once so labeled, one is then jettisoned to the realm of archaic beliefs to be discarded as “the nutty fringe” of society — completely void of love and tolerance for those who oppose such a “narrow view.” There *is* however — an overriding *fact* that cannot be denied in any discussion of this matter. The family makeup as described in the Scriptures *is* designated by God. Those of us who are His followers *did not create* the so called “narrow view.” That pattern and standard was set in place by *God* — *not* “the nutty fringe.”

It’s very risky and in fact painful to have a discussion of this nature in today’s society, especially among Christian brothers and sisters — but it *is* a discussion that’s *needed*. The church of today looks *so* much like the secular world that it’s difficult to discuss the topic of family makeup without seeming crass and uncaring toward those members of the Body who find themselves *in* a family situation that is not in line with the pattern established by God. That doesn’t however, relieve us of the *responsibility* to teach that portion of the Word.

While we recognize there are *many* societal quandaries affecting the structure of families, let us discuss *one* that recently came to our attention. Not long ago, we read an article in our local newspaper that included an acronym that was new to us. It was “SMC”, which we learned means “Single Mother by Choice”. This term begs a Christian to ask — *who’s* choice? Since the family pattern instituted by God from the time of Adam and Eve is for a childbearing household to have a father, a mother and children resulting *from* that union — exactly *who* is making the choice if *God* has failed to provide the necessary components required to meet the standards established by Him to “make” a family? Obviously, the answer to that question is the single mother, by *her* own choice. Let’s put it another way. We know numerous young men and women who — for whatever reason — have not “found” that person with whom they will spend the rest of their lives and bear children as a result of their union. Doesn’t it seem appropriate then that those individuals might want to *consider* the possibility that God has — for reasons known only to Him — *purposely* failed to provide the necessary components to make that happen? Yet, the term SMC indicates that *God’s* choice just isn’t an acceptable direction for some so they make the decision to override what would seem to be God’s plan for their life and become an SMC. God *has* given all of us the power to make our *own* choices — so — if we aren’t *satisfied* with what God

seems to be choosing in a particular matter — why *not* do our *own* thing? Now, having said this we don’t want to overlook the fact that there are obviously instances where *God* chooses to “make” single parent families because of the death of one of the spouses. That circumstance however would obviously be a choice *made* by God — not the single parent. In such a case as that, faith would indicate that God knew the remaining spouse was capable of dealing with such adversity and would then be an SPGC — Single Parent by *God’s* Choice.

The flagrant disregard in today’s society to adhere to the family structure that conforms to *God’s* pattern has opened the door for *every* type of household one can imagine. Many current households have children living in the same house with adults who are in no way related to them, have absolutely no commitment to a family structure of any sort and are there only to fulfill their own selfish needs and desires. This is a formula for the *disastrous* results we see today. More often than not, the abuser of young teens and children is a male who is the boy friend of the victim’s mother. That abuser is also more often than not a “live-in mate” of the mother of the children. That mother has created the environment that not only allows but even encourages abuse to happen. Perhaps the mother is more interested in having *her* needs met than she is with providing a safe, secure and Godly environment for her children.

It is important that the church as well as we Christians return to teaching the truth about what God intended the family to be. Because there are so many in the church and in our own families who have failed to follow the pattern God established for the make up of families, we have become intimidated and fearful of teaching that particular subject. At Paul’s last meeting with the Elders at Ephesus he said:

*“And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you **all** the counsel of God.” (Acts 20:25-27 KJV)*

We must do as Paul did and proclaim the *whole* counsel of God. We can not be intimidated by the world. If Christians fail to teach this lesson who *will* teach it?

Many Biblical teaching are closely attached to comprehending the pattern of a Godly family structure within the home.

“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? ” (Luke 11:9-13 NASB)

How can children without a loving father in the home possibly relate to God as their loving Father? Without an *earthly* loving father model in their lives, it’s very difficult for them to appreciate the value of God being a loving Father. Even