



## CHAPTER FIVE:

### I Will Lead My Family To Be Healthy Church Members

*"I Am a Church Member"; by Thom Rainer*

## INTRODUCTION

Three pastors got together for coffee one day and found all their churches had bat-infestation problems. "I got so mad," said one, "I took a shotgun and fired at them. It made holes in the ceiling, but did nothing to the bats." "I tried trapping them alive," said the second. "Then I drove 50 miles before releasing them, but they beat me back to the church." "I haven't had any more problems," said the third. "What did you do?" asked the others, amazed. "I simply baptized them and let them join the church," he replied. "I haven't seen them since."

Rainer noted that there is an unhealthy pattern for many church members. He emphasized that many people

*"Get excited about church. Get more involved. Discover the imperfections of the church. Get discouraged about the church. Leave the church."*



***Have you see this unhealthy pattern in people's lives? Has this pattern been evident in your own life?***

## LESSON SUMMARY

In this session, we will see that Scripture emphasizes the need for families to instill healthy church membership into the fabric of their family's DNA. We have already seen, as we have worked through this study, our responsibility to serve within the church, check our preferences and desires at the door, and pray for its leaders. This week we are going to examine what it means to lead our families to worship, love, pray for, and serve in the church together.



***What are some hindrances that prevent families from being more involved in and committed to the church?***

## Church and Family

Paul, in Ephesians 5 & 6, compares the family with the church. Rainer wrote, "It's no surprise that we are taught in Scripture that families are analogous to the church." Consider these verses:

### **Ephesians 5:22 - 6:4**

**22** *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

**25** *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32*

*This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. **33** However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

**6** *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2** "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), **3** "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." **4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*



**How does this text describe the relationship of our immediate families and the church family?**

Isn't it interesting that Paul compares the family and the church in this way? Husbands and wives should relate to one another in the same way that Christ and the church relate to one another. Parents and children should relate to one another in the same way that we, as God's children, relate to our heavenly Father.

Rainer offered this insight into the text:

*"These passages remind us that, just as we are supposed to sacrifice and love our families unconditionally, so are we to love those churches where God has placed us. Our family members are not perfect, and neither are the members of the church. We are to find our joy in serving both our families and the church. We are further reminded of the importance of the family to the church. We are to encourage our family members to be faithful to the church. We should pray together as family members for our churches. Indeed, as we are to strive to love our families more deeply, so should we exhort our family members to love the church more deeply."*

As we consider the responsibility to lead our families to be biblical church members, we will examine three specific ways that we can accomplish this task:

## **1. Pray Together As A Family For The Church**

Last week we considered the urgent need to pray for church leaders. They are under physical, spiritual, and mental strain all the time and church members have a responsibility to pray for them regularly. But, have you ever considered praying for your church and its leaders together as a family? Rainer offered several specific areas where you, as a family, can pray for church leaders:

- For spiritual protection
- For protection from moral failure
- For the preaching of the Word
- For their families
- For encouragement
- For physical strength
- For courage
- For discernment
- For wisdom in their leadership

Here are some specific ways that you can pray for the church:

- For the gospel to change lives
- For unity in the body
- For impact in the community
- For a heart for the lost
- For sound doctrine
- For specific ministries
- For scheduled times of worship

There are fewer things that will cultivate a love for the church and its leaders within your family than praying for them on a regular basis. While this may seem awkward at first, it can often prove to be one of the most beneficial ways to keep your family involved in the church. Rainer wrote:

*“Part of the opportunity and honor of being a church member is the teaching of our family to love the church. And that teaching often begins by praying together as a family for the church where God placed us.”*



**Do you pray regularly with your family specifically for the church and its leaders? If not, what practical steps can you take to begin doing this?**

## 2. Worship Together As A Family

Another way to lead our families to be healthy church members is to worship together as a family. Rainer wrote:

*“As a church member, I am responsible for encouraging and leading my entire family to worship together in the church. If I am married, I seek to include my spouse. If I am a parent, I seek to include my children. My family must see my love for the church. Many church members are single. They have no immediate family with whom they can worship in the church. Regardless, there are still people watching them and how they love the church. They are to be an example to others.”*

The writer of Hebrews emphasized the need for believers to assemble together for worship. He wrote in **Hebrews 10**:

**19** Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, **20** by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, **21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how to stir up one another to

*love and good works, **25** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

He challenged the believers to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” It is evident that some believers had begun neglecting meeting together for worship and it was negatively affecting the church. We, as families, should strive to worship together as often as possible, both corporately and privately.



**What hinders your family from worshipping together? What steps can you take to emphasize, to your family, the importance of attendance and participation in weekly worship services?**

As we consider the importance of families worshipping together, it is necessary to consider that church members may have family members who are not Christians or not part of the church. This is not a new scenario! In fact, Paul addressed this issue in 1 Corinthians 7. Take some time to read through verses 10-14 and consider Paul’s admonition to spouses of unbelievers – they are to be an example to their unbelieving spouse. Rainer emphasized this when he wrote:

*“It can be lonely to be the believer in an unbelieving family. It can likewise be lonely going to worship at your church alone, while your spouse remains behind. But God has given such people a mission field: their families. Like the missionary who travels thousands of miles to tell the good news to the unevangelized people, this church member is to tell the good news in his or her own home.”*

As church members, we need to encourage fellow church members who are attending without their spouses and families and we need to consistently pray for them and their families.



***What is the role of a believing spouse to an unbelieving spouse?  
How does that manifest itself in church membership?***

Worshipping together as a family is important. Take some time to read through this anonymous poem and consider what would happen if this is the way we approached the church:

### **If You Want to Kill the Church**

Never go to your church or meetings held there,  
If you do go, be late, it's no one's affair.  
If the weather is bad, either too hot or snowing,  
Just stay home and rest, for there'll be others going.

But should you attend, be sure and remember  
To find fault with the work, each official and member.  
Be sure to hold back on your offerings and tithes,  
The bills will be paid by the rest of the guys.

And never take office if offered the post,  
But eagerly criticize work of the host.  
If not on a committee you're placed, be sore!  
If you find that you are, don't attend any more.

When asked your opinion on this thing or that,  
Have nothing to say, just turn 'em down flat.  
Then after the meeting, shine out like the sun  
By telling the folks how it should have been done.

Don't do any more than you possibly can,  
Leave the work for some other woman or man.  
And when you see faithful ones work themselves sick,  
Then stand up and holler, "It's run by a clique!"

### 3. Love The Church And Encourage Your Family To Do The Same

Have you ever heard someone say, "I love Jesus but I don't like the church." That would be the same thing as someone coming to you and telling you they love you but hate your spouse! The Bible does not give us the option of loving Jesus and not loving the church. If we love Jesus we will love His church! Rainer wrote:

*"As a church member, I am not merely to like my church or serve my church well. I am to fall deeply in love with my church. Christ is the bridegroom, and the church is the bride. My commitment is to love that bride with an unwavering and unconditional love. Unconditional love is not always easy. If someone is perfect and meets our every perceived need, it's easy to think we love that person. But such love is one-way. It's all about me and my needs. Unconditional love means I will continue to fall more deeply in love regardless of the response. It means my love for the church will grow even as I may disagree with something or encounter disagreeable people."*



**Do you love your church? Why is unconditional love such a challenge, especially as it applies to church membership?**

We are only able to love our church unconditionally when we understand that Jesus loved us unconditionally. Paul described Christ's love for us in Romans 5:8: "But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." We were God's enemies and yet Christ died for us. Jesus loved his church so much that he willingly laid down his life to redeem her out of her sin.



**How is Christ's death on the cross an example for us as church members relating to one another?**

Rainer closes each chapter with a pledge that he asks each church member to sign and date:

## **THE FIFTH PLEDGE**

I am a church member.

I will lead my family to be good members of this church as well. We will pray together for our church. We will worship together in our church. We will serve together in our church. And we will ask Christ to help us fall deeper in love with this church because He gave His life for her.

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