



## I. Introduction

*"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:" (Matthew 7:24).*

"Why Can't We just Get along Together?" is a frequently asked question among members of the same family noticeably or unnoticeably verbally or silently.. The answer to this question is not just an applied method but rather a practical life. In order for a family to "get along" and experience spiritual growth and success, they must do the things that the Lord Jesus Christ preached and taught by example.

For a family to grow and function well there must be a designated time for prayer, reading the Holy Bible, and admonishing each other to do those things which are lawful, right, and obedient in the sight of God. Worship of the Lord Jesus Christ and attending the Divine Liturgy on an anticipated and consistent schedule as a family must be a priority. Such a willingness and gracious obedience to the Lord gives birth to a truly happy family.

Although prayer, reading the Holy Bible, and attending the Divine Liturgy make a significant difference in the spiritual life of a family, yet they are

not the full measure of spiritual integrity. Salvation is not based on hearing alone nor is it based on faith alone. Rather, our salvation is based on "DOING" the things spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. When the family unit puts its eternal destiny as its primary goal, everyone's desires for the goodness of the family becomes primary and the standard of love and mutual respect will increase. This in turn will create a family environment in which its members will ultimately "get along".

*"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19).*

Think about these impersonal methods of communication; what if we were to do without them? No land line, No cell phone, No fax machine, No directional guidance, No computer, No texting services, No overnight delivery, No airmail, No email and perhaps even No telegraph. How would a family communicate without these devices or services often intrusively integrated into their family life? Would not family members have to directly communicate with each other? Would there be communication, dialogue, negotiation, and exchange of ideas?

Unfortunately, all the indifferent attitude brought about by the preoccupation with devices and gadgets has had the same influence upon our spiritual life.

The question that we need to stop and ask ourselves is: do we willingly accept the Lord Jesus Christ's teachings as suits our schedules, work ethics, and in the fast pace of our family lives between school, work and worldly activities?

Perhaps we should examine the example of a father and a mother who created home family environments that are an inspiration to us all.

Abraham, the father of a nation, and St. Mary, the Mother of God both of different Biblical eras, one old and one young, one with servants and one willing to become a servant; both promised "a son", and both succeeded in making their families "got along".

## **II. A Father of Faith**



*"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way" (Psalm 37:23).*

### **A. Abraham: A Father of Faith**

Abraham's faith was DOING the will of God. Throughout the Holy Book of Genesis chapters 12 through 22, we learn of God's call to Abraham to follow Him. When Abraham chose to follow

God, he made an overt decision for his entire family and his servants. Abraham's faith was tested on numerous occasions; the promise of a son would be a long awaited one; the giving up of land, extended family members, inherited property, and accumulated privilege; and the poignant sacrifice of Isaac, his son of promise.

Abraham's faith was not impulsive, not-all-or-nothing in intensity, nor was it lukewarm.

Abraham was the head of a household of faith in a continual growth process. He led that family's faith through his love of God and willingness to obey Him. It seems he discovered good works first, a type of justification by ongoing faith, and exemplified an active love of God. What family would not want to follow such a father?

Through Abraham's love for God, he further had a great capacity of love for his wife Sarah, and for his son Isaac. This love tied his family together in unison. Abraham put God first and foremost before himself and his family as evidenced in his willingness to sacrifice his only son, the son, of promise by Sarah, who would carry his family's name generations to come. Thus, Abraham was tested and tested again but he persevered through his strong, active and proactive faith and so his family "got along".

Abraham's son could look to him for guidance because Abraham looked to God for guidance. This father and son "got along".

*"Will you not from this time cry to me, 'My Father, You are the guide of my youth?'" (Jeremiah 3:4).*

*"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him" (Isaiah 51:1-2).*

B. Abraham: A Loving Husband

*"Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25).*

A home is created as its blessings come forth. As each blessing is fruitful so should the binding of love and care. Children flourish when their parents love one another and model respectful behavior one to the other by showing interests in each other's ideas and opinions. Accepting

differences in ideas and opinions nourishes a family and encourages its diversity and strength.

### III. A Mother of Love



#### A. St. Mary: the Servant

*"Behold the servant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to Your Word"*  
(Luke 1:38).

As a young girl, St. Mary, the Mother of God, showed herself of great faith. Her response to God was immediate and selfless. It was without doubt. It was simple. St. Mary loved God and was pleased to do His Will.

St. Mary did not hesitate to grant the angel his heaven-sent request knowing what people might think of her integrity and consequently gossip about her. She simply and without remorse chose to do God's will. St. Mary did not consult with relatives. Her love for God was absolute.

Many scholars believe that St. Mary's humanness may have blocked her understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ's teachings concerning the salvation of the human race. However, she kept those teachings in her heart until further insightful and meaningful observations and teachings. We read of her

simple faith and willing submission to the will of God. St. Mary took her place with others who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not read of her boasting as to her Son being the Savior of the world nor the subsequent glory she would be entitled to.

#### B. St. Mary: the Wife

St. Mary was a faithful wife to her earthly husband, St. Joseph, a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, her only Son, and to His Holy Cross. St. Mary's faith made her goodness evident and her capacity of love strengthened her. Perhaps only after the death and glorious Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ did she realize and understand that the Son who had lived among them is the God Incarnate she had bore. Then St. Mary worshipped Him.

St. Mary loved St. Joseph. St. Joseph loved St. Mary. This is evident in the displaying of mutual respect and kindness they had for each other.

*"Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table" (Psalm 128:3).*

### IV. Godly Children



*"So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands" (Psalm 78:72).*

With the examples of Abraham and St. Mary before us, what can we learn from their only son (Abraham's only son by Sarah)?

- A. Their children grew up living Godly lives; they did not have any regrets later.

*"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth; before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).*

- B. The Word of God was upheld in order to make right decisions within and outside the family unit.

*"And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15).*

*"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house,*



*when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).*

- C. God took care of their good name when they were apart from their families, unto death, and from generation to generation.

*"Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right" (Proverbs 20:11).*

- D. Efforts to teach their children were never in vain.

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

## **V. How to Assess Today's Family Quarrels**

*"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).*

- A. Worship was a sacred responsibility in the time and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. For a Jew to

be restored and forgiven of a wrong doing, the appropriate sacrifice to God had to be made. The Lord Jesus Christ makes it plain that today reconciliation is still important before approaching the altar. In this Holy Bible verse the Lord is not concerned with who started what first, who said what to whom, and what the majority of those listening have to say. The quarrel or disagreement is not what is to be embraced but rather the reconnection with God, Who is the strength of the reconciliation. It is reconciliation to the Lord Jesus Christ and not conflict resolution that should be brought to the altar.

*"Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God was pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the*

*righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:18-21).*

B. Faith

A family that lacks faith and works might be considering earthly pleasures as more important.

*"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:1-3).*

C. Meekness

A family that seeks to strengthen themselves by criticizing others is prideful.

*"Do not speak evil of one another brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy Who are you to judge another?" (James 4:11-12).*

Ignoring one's faults while magnifying those of another is against the teachings of our Lord. In actuality such people need to honestly look into their faults and weaknesses and try to correct and get rid of them. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself warned us against judging others. He plainly stated that we must first honestly and sincerely examine our own faults and when we do so, we will be able to "take care of our own log" before we worry so much about speaking to and pointing out the "speck" in someone else's eye.

*"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:3-5).*

#### D. Over Self Confidence

Overly confident of gifts and talents is a sure way to stumble.

*"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city*

*spend a year there, buy and sell and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. 'But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:13-17).*

#### E. Self Discipline

A family that lacks the discipline to stop inappropriate behavior in children will "never get along".

*"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because of his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them" (I Samuel 3:13).*

*"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15).*

*"Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26).*

In summary, the family looking to avoid "not getting along" need to look at the examples of our father Abraham and St. Mary the Mother of God. The influences they exhorted upon their children is self-evident in families "that got along". Quarrels in these families were reconciled not self serving for earthly pleasures, critical of others to elevate self, were not documented as prideful or overly confident of gifts and talents. They were faithful, loving and obedient. They were actively believing and doing the commands of God the Ultimate Father.

*"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).*

Bishop Youssef  
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern  
United States