

I Am A Church Member Chapter 5: “I Will Lead My Family To Be Healthy Church Members”

Opening Illustration & Introduction:

Three pastors got together for coffee one day and found all their churches had 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?
- 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 5:29 – 6:4 22 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?

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

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 to 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: 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?

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.