

HELPING NEW CONVERTS NAVIGATE FAMILY ISSUES

Jesus: Pro or Anti Family?

- In the Gospels, we find a mixed bag of instructions about family. (Matthew 15:3-4, Luke 14:26, Matthew 12:46-50)
- Following Jesus meant belonging to two families, a natural family and a faith family.
- Jesus's call to join a new family generates an unavoidable loyalty conflict.

Getting Our Priorities Straight

- Both Scripture and Christian history reinforce the idea that the family of God should rank higher than the natural family.
- The notion that loyalty to God could somehow be separated from loyalty to God's family would have been foreign to Jesus and the early Christians.
- The first four of the Ten Commandments focus on our relationship with God (Exodus 20:3–11); the next six address our relationships with other humans (Exodus 20:12–17).

Maintaining Good Family Relationships

- Osman's personal account of being disowned by his family.
- Some are afraid that following Christ will cause them to lose their family.
- There is wisdom in holding back and allowing family to see the slow changes that happen through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Accepting Jesus does come with a cost, not all costs look the same for everyone.
- One of the best ways for new believers to commend the gospel to their family is simply by being an exemplary family member.
- Some new Christians grow apart from their family, partly because of their busy involvement with their new family, the church.

Hostility to Conversion

- For some non-Christian families, a family member's conversion to Christianity is repulsive.
- In many cultures today, honor and shame are the most important values for evaluating actions. Changing one's religion shames the family.
- New converts need to be wise about how and when they inform their families about their conversion. They also need to think wisely about practical matters—like baptism.

Family Obligations and Traditions

- We also need to help converts think through their family obligations.
 - Christians should obey their parents, whether they're Christian or not (Col. 3:20). Only when such obedience involves disobeying the law of God must the child refuse.
 - Not participating in family events can be viewed as a serious violation of family honor, so talk with new believers about what they can and cannot do at such occasions.
 - Some practices don't have religious connotations. They can participate in these events without violating their conscience.
 - When Christians conscientiously and sacrificially care for family needs—unlike non-Christian family members—this is a source of joy and a witness to the gospel.
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