CHRISTIAN NURTURE THROUGH THE FAMILY LIFE MINISTRY IN BAEKSEOK CHURCH IN KOREA

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

Introduction

Korea in the twentieth century is in the wake of a rapidly changing civilization which is largely due to the impact of the industrial revolution that is sweeping the country, and its resultant social progress. The old agricultural society is shifting towards the modern age of technology. The Korean family is caught up in these changes. As a result, the moral and spiritual upbringing of the family is highly affected. Traditional family concepts are giving way to new family patterns.

The Korean church has for some time now been concerned with Christian issues and challenges facing family life and parenthood that arise from these rapid social changes. The need for family life ministry is so urgent that the church's role in the life of the family often resembles a rescue operation more than that of an educational venture. Family living skills involve the total person, and are best learned within the framework of the family rather than in a classroom.

Family ministry needs a theological base that affirms the importance of nurture and that places moral

value in the way we relate to nurture. It is the belief of the writer that theology should regulate all that the church is and does; thus, it is an important part of this thesis.

God instituted the family (Gen. 2:18); thus, the family belongs to God; duly appointed for His purpose and goals. By divine permission, a man and a woman may co-operate with God's purpose and become part of it. The home they establish is also God's establishment. "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain (Ps. 129:1). By human and divine act, the children receive their status as members of the family.

In this regards, however, the home becomes a corporate ownership of God and man. It is very important; therefore, to teach children about the Word of God. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6). ". . . impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you get up . . ." (Deut. 6:6-9). The Christian family does not exist solely for its own benefit; it is created to bring glory and honor to God.

Also, the home itself is a mission field and the church must reach out to the family, instructing it in its task of Christian nurture. Martin Luther spoke of this task as a "Christian vocation." Every Christian has a

mission and a ministry. It begins in his own family.[1]

The writer knows of many church members who have sacrificed their family life in order to build the life of the church. On the other hand, many churches fail to offer spiritual enrichment to families.

The writer has always believed that there should be full cooperation between the church and the home. Both are created by God; thus, they should live together in harmony. Family ministry grows out of a strong conviction that the church should support the family. The quality of family life is improved by improving the quality of church life.

This study points to a very significant step toward reorientation of Christian nurture through the study of the family life ministry of a Korean local church. It is designed to help families learn how to live their Christian faith in their homes and in the world, and to strengthen the church's ministry to families.

Statement of the Problem

In the light of the rapid social changes and their resultant impact on Korean family life, and as the

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[1]Oscar E. Feucht, Ministry to Families: A Handbook for Christian Congregation (Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 16.

church faces new tasks that have to do with family relationships, problems on the following areas arise: communication breakdown between husband and wife; the generation gap, resulting in communication breakdown between parents and children; family break-up; upsurge of materialism; downgrading of traditional and cultural values, and problems concerning sexual morality.

This study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the concerns, problems and issues which Korean families face in the present-day world?

2. In what ways can the local church minister to families?

3. How can the family cooperate with the local church to fulfill its Christian mission in Korean society?

Assumptions

The following assumptions are made in this study:

1. Members who are working in the local church have defined their own concepts of the ministry and relationship between the church and the family, based on working and living together in their community.

2. Church members and the community have formulated models or images of Christian family life as the output products of their own church education program.

3. Studies of family life ministry in the local

church will provide a sound basis for contextualizing and developing ministry for the Korean church.

Importance of the Study

This study hopes to help parents achieve mutual understanding and cooperation around their common goal of developing Christian personality in family life in the Korean church. Also, this study involves several basic tasks:

1. To gain an understanding of the importance of the home and the church in developing Christian qualities, and to learn how the home and the church may cooperate in the Christian nurture of growing persons.

2. To dedicate individual members and families to Christian living in their homes and to encourage them to participate in the life of the church.

3. To help families find solutions to their immediate and recognized problems and to seek for deeper underlying issues in family life.

4. To enable families to re-examine their family life and set up new goals which they can all accept, and to begin to work toward these goals.

5. To nurture Christians who can follow the Biblical pattern or roles in their families as well as to follow the Biblical pattern of behavior, and to give enlightenment to the unbelievers.

This study of the relationship of the home and church in their common task of Christian nurture will explore opportunities to reach individuals with knowledge, understanding, and skills which would influence the development of Christian character, both within the home and in the whole church.

This thesis, therefore, is designed for Christian congregations in the local church in Korea with the specific purpose of guiding and of directing the leaders or workers of the church in serving the families.

Scope and Delimitation of Study

This study is limited to the relationship between church and family life ministry with supporting programs for the family life ministry of the local church in Korea.

This includes characterizing the typical Korean family and finding out the variations in the members' perception of the ministry. It is also concerned with studying possible programs which could enhance the Christian education of the family life ministry.

These said limitations are set forth in order to concentrate on the aims and to attain the goals of this study. Foremost in mind are the missional tasks of the family in the local church and how to accomplish them. The programs which are formulated in this study are aimed towards fulfilling that need.

Furthermore, all the programs formulated here aim to improve the skills of the family ministry of the local church in Korea. It remains to be seen whether they are effective and adequate.

Definition of Terms

To help the reader understand the terms clearly and to differentiate the usage from its ordinary lingo, the writer is presenting them together with their implied meaning as relevant to the study.

Christian Nurture. In this study, this refers to establishing one's home and rearing one's children in the Christian faith. This is a lifetime relationship with God. It is never finished or completed, as it involves a growing understanding and commitment to precepts. Christian nurture is a lifetime process.

Program. This refers to activities of the local church to be implemented for the purpose of increasing and of improving the effectiveness of teaching for the development or growth of the members of the local church.

Family. William N. Stephen writes that a family is:

> . . . a social arrangement based on marriage and the marriage contract, including recognition of the rights and duties of parenthood, common residence for husband, wife, and children, and reciprocal economic obligations between husband

and wife.[2]

The marriage contract or agreement may or may not be written, but it is binding for both parties. It could be a verbal expression of two persons, or in the case of a man with several wives, more than two persons. This agreement spells out the rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives.

Family Life Ministry. This refers to programs and to activities in response to family needs at all levels in the life of the church.

Local Church. It is a given geographical representation of the universal church. It is this usage of the word which is used throughout the pages of this thesis. God's pattern has always been that the universal church is manifested in the local church, and the local church carries out the purposes and program of the universal church.

Deacon and Deaconess. Men and women who have been baptized and have been members of the local church. They are nominated by a council made up of the ordained pastor and elders. The function of the deacons and deaconesses is to help the pastor in the administration

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[2]William N. Stephen, The Family in Cross-Cultural Perspective (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p.8.

and management of the church, in the visitation of members, in the Christian education program in the local church, without monetary compensation. After finishing their term for a year, they may be re-nominated and re-elected to continue in office, depending on their faithfulness in the work.

Senior Deaconess. A senior deaconess is elected by the local church congregation. In order to qualify for this office, a woman should be a deaconess, should be 45 years of age and above, and should have served the church for many years. A senior deaconess is very much respected in the local church. She serves as an example of Christian living to the congregation. Senior deaconess has the same function as deaconess.

Kye. It is a loan club, a mutual financing association.

Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis

Chapter 2 deals with the review of related literature. The first part surveys the literature which describes the Biblical concepts of the family. The second part seeks to find out the contemporary forms of the family as the members respond to development programs in the local church. The third part summarizes briefly the theoretical framework of the thesis based on related literature.

Chapter 3 contains the methods of procedure and sources of data. The first part identifies and describes the subjects of this study: the Korean family, members of the Korean church, and the respondents who are parents. Next follows a description of the methods of research used in this study, particularly the descriptive research through participant observation, and qualitative and verbal research through personal interview, visitation, and questionnaire.

Chapter 4 discusses the problems, concerns and issues of Christian Korean families as perceived by the members. The first part describes the Christian members in the local church: their age, sex, status, profession and occupation, number of children, educational attainment, church position, and other information. The second part describes the problems, concerns, and issues encountered by Korean families in contemporary society.

Chapter 5 describes the local church ministry for families as perceived by and performed by the members.

Chapter 6 describes the family participation in the local church activities, as perceived and performed by the father, mother and children, and a comparison of their participation in these church activities.

Chapter 7 deals with programs and their implementation. The first part proposes Christian nurture programs for families of the local church to strengthen

specially those programs that have been weak or neglected, and the second part is a suggested schedule of a year's program of activities for family and church.

Chapter 8 deals with the summary and conclusion of the study, and recommendations.