



The Family Business

For this reason I
kneel before the
Father, from whom
his whole family in
heaven and on earth
derives its name.

Ephesians 3:14-15 NIV

I DON'T KNOW HOW OLD I WAS, but I was young enough to be wearing a silly play suit—a pastel, almost feminine one-piece number with short sleeves and short pants. It was summer, and I was in our backyard, near the point where the upper lawn sloped down to our large garden plot. If I was young enough to be wearing such a thing, I was yet old enough to be embarrassed by it. But so long as I was alone in the backyard I could live with my mom's choice of apparel for the younger of her two boys.

Quite unexpectedly, however, I found myself no longer alone. Around the corner of our house came my friend and schoolmate Lew Miller. Lewie (as we called him back then, before he became the owner of the largest electrical/plumbing supply company in town and a civic leader) seemed unfazed by my rather girlish attire. He was there to deliver a May Basket to me—which was the sort of quaint tradition children followed back when tires had tubes. I was mortified that Lewie had caught me in my dainty play suit, but his mind was on something more important.

Oddly enough, his thoughts were on the future. “You're lucky,” he said to me, serious beyond his few years. “Your dad doesn't have a business you'll have to take over when you grow up.” At that time, my dad was an electrician for the M&StL (Minneapolis and St. Louis)

Railroad, while Lewie's dad owned the abovementioned electrical/plumbing supply house. Obviously my friend was feeling the pressure, even at that young age, to follow into his father's business.

And my friend Lewie was prescient. He did indeed take over the supply house when his dad died, and I did *not* become an electrician.

Already on the Books

Every family has a “business.” In some cases it is obvious: a parent or grandparent has created a going concern, and at least some of the children are expected to come into that business to continue it into the future. In other instances a parent has, over many years, developed a respectable and profitable trade skill, and hopes that one or more of his children will take up the same trade and “make his dad proud.” Often, however, the family “business” is simply to uphold and sustain its unique character. Parents want their children to uphold the honor of their family, doing nothing that would tarnish its reputation in the community.

God's family through Christ is no different. Every believer is expected to follow in the footsteps of the Savior, who, better than anyone else, understands the family business: His kingdom.

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

John 18:36-37

Curiously (by human standards), even though He is the king, Christ is not the CEO of this enterprise.

"If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

John 12:47-50

Every Christian is expected to come into the family business. In fact, whether he realizes it or not, every believer is *already* on the books. Employment is not optional. And what is the Christian's job description in the family business? Jesus said it best: "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth." Every Christian's life is a testimony; he brings either honor or shame to the family name. The family's name is "Christ." Its members are called "Christ-ians." Every Christian has a Father who expects His children to follow in His path: to testify in word and deed to the truth about Jesus Christ—to declare both in word and action the gospel.

A Good Name

○ God, it is You who knows my folly,
And my wrongs are not hidden from You.
May those who wait for You not be
ashamed through me,
○ Lord God of hosts;
May those who seek You not be dishonored through me,
○ God of Israel.

Psalms 69:5-6

Even though my dad didn't have his own business for me to continue, I still bore the responsibility to uphold our family name. For all of his life, my dad was a hard worker, a responsible family man, a respected member of the community. Though he was not an educated man—to support his family, he had left school after the eighth grade—he always did what he could to educate himself and improve his station. Dad was active in our church, and was the head usher—back when ushers actually ushered—for many years.

As his son, I bore the responsibility to uphold my family's good name. Brought up in a relatively small town, most people with whom I came into contact knew whose son I was. My behavior mattered. I didn't ask for that responsibility; it came with my birth.

At our second birth, our birth into the family of God through Christ, we are given a new last name: Christian. We are born into

Christ's kingdom, with all its benefits and responsibilities. As children of the King, we bear the obligation to uphold the good family name—not to bring shame and dishonor upon the family.

I cannot recall anyone in my hometown, when I was growing up, who wished ill upon my family. Where we were known, only good will and respect was afforded. But the same cannot be said about the family of my second birth. This fallen world bears no affection or good will toward the family of Christ. Indeed, it does everything it can, under the authority and influence of *its* king, to denigrate Christianity.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

1 Peter 5:8-9

We have a powerful enemy, but when the day finally comes when he is roasting in the fires of his torment (Revelation 20:10), the family name of Christ the Lord will still stand in all power and glory. Thus, while we tread the soil of this earth, it is our burden to stand for its good name—to be about the family business in purity of heart, guided and empowered by the Spirit. As we labor in His name, we are to deal honestly, forthrightly with not only our brothers and sisters in faith, but with

everyone who is not yet part of the family.

For we have the honor of bearing the Master's name.

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O Thou, to whose all-searching sight
The darkness shineth as the light,
Search, prove my heart; it pants for Thee;
O burst these bonds, and set it free!

Wash out its stains, refine its dress,
Nail my affections to the Cross;
Hallow each thought; let all within
Be clean, as Thou, my Lord, art clean!

If in this darksome wild I stray,
Be Thou my Light, be Thou my Way;
No foes, no violence I fear,
No fraud, while Thou, my God, art near.

When rising floods my soul o'erflow,
When sinks my heart in waves of woe,
Jesus, Thy timely aid impart,
And raise my head, and cheer my heart.

Saviour, where'er Thy steps I see,
Dauntless, untired, I follow Thee;
O let Thy hand support me still,
And lead me to Thy holy hill!

If rough and thorny be the way,
My strength proportion to my day;
Till toil, and grief, and pain shall cease,
Where all is calm, and joy, and peace.

Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf

(Trans. John Wesley)