

Family Matters

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. – 1 Timothy 5:8

Uncle Dave was a special guy. He was married, widowed, and re-married. He had no kids, though. But as a young boy, I knew I was special to him. He treated me like the apple of his eye. He helped my parents out as well when hard times hit. He was just one of those people you would call a really good guy. That was all by the time I was around. Prior to that, he had apparently had a pretty rugged past. But that wasn't the Uncle Dave I knew. My Uncle Dave was a good and decent man from the time I knew him. In my early high school days, Uncle Dave was hit with Alzheimer's. He wandered out of his house and walked a few miles. I had to fetch him on a few occasions to take him home. (He would always listen to me for some reason, which was helpful if he had meandered a mile or more from his house!) It was very sad to see Uncle Dave like that. The family ultimately had to place Uncle Dave in a personal care facility for safety reasons. I visited him and talked with him there frequently, because he was my Uncle Dave.

Fast forward a few years, and I've been saved. It's the summer of my sophomore year in college. I'm serving in whatever capacity I can at church, wanting to be a part of everything that's happening in the service of the Lord. I'm at some church function or outreach almost daily. I come home one day (still living with my parents, obviously) and my mom is not in a good humor. She's upset with me. I haven't cut the grass as I promised that I would, and she takes me to task for it (rightly so!). I don't put up much of an argument, because I know it will be to no avail, but she's telling me I'm working so hard to save souls at church that I've forgotten about my responsibilities at home. I don't want to agree with that, but I'm starting to see she has a point. And then she said it. "When's the last time you visited your Uncle Dave?" That stung – badly. But it was exactly the rebuke that I needed to hear. My unsaved mom's words were from God Himself. In my zeal for the Lord's work, I had forgotten about my family.

I began to correct course. I started visiting Uncle Dave again, regularly. To spend time with him, sure. But now also carrying something he needed desperately. The gospel of Christ. I knew he wasn't saved, but I guess for some time I had convinced myself that the gospel couldn't or wouldn't penetrate the barrier of the Alzheimer's. That was foolish. So now I'd share it again with him at every visit, over and over again. I have reason to believe it got through, and that I will one day see my Uncle Dave again on Heaven's shore.

As a young Christian, I didn't know 1 Timothy 5:8. The Lord used my righteously indignant mom and her frustration with my lack of attendance at home to help me to learn it. Our Christian testimony and usefulness is severely hampered when we forget our family. Search the Scriptures and you will find that family matters to God – a lot! Yes – we need to go to the highways and hedges. Yes – there is a world that has never heard and needs to hear about Christ. Yes – our neighbors and our friends need our witness. All of this is true and must not be neglected. But our families must not take second seat to all of those evangelistic needs and efforts, either. The Spirit of God can and will empower us to do it all. Let us make sure to ever be mindful of this and do the Lord's work while not neglecting our families. – D. Murcek