

Letter to Arthur

Dear Arthur,

Elbert wanted me to write to you and tell you about something we have seen here which may also be a problem in the church in Island Pond. It is concerning the attitudes of the baptized children. Here, after the children were baptized, they were moved into the single men and women's rooms. This was because they did not really have enough room for them to continue to stay in with the other children, and they figured it would be good for them to be around the older people to help them to mature in certain areas. Somehow they began to be treated more as adults than as children. And they took upon themselves the role of an adult member of the body. They began to exalt their opinions to the level of the adults of the church. They have become very bossy and proud. There is Samuel and Birgir who are 11 years old. Chrystelle who is 10, Simone Marsha who is almost 9, and Uriah who is 7. Uriah is a VERY foolish child. He has been spoken to very much by everyone about it, even at the tables they have rebuked and warned him as one who is supposed to have the Holy Spirit. (Elbert wonders about this, for the fruit of the Holy Spirit in his life is difficult to see, although he has changed in many ways from receiving good consistent discipline from John and even from Valerie.) So now the other baptized children have taken it upon themselves to constantly correct Uriah for his foolishness. In a very authoritative manner they are always saying "Uriah stop! That is foolishness!" They speak as if they are adults and expect Uriah to respect them and obey them. In fact most of their relationships with one another are full of one instructing the other sternly. But none of them are really in the place to be an instructor. All of them from Samuel on down are also guilty of a more subtle form of foolishness. The brothers here began to be very concerned as they began to see the fruit of giving these children TOO MUCH at TOO YOUNG an age. They had grown very independent from their parents, even to the point that recently when Dennis and Isabelle had a problem with Chrystelle they thought that she would need to be brought before the whole church as if she were one of the single women. Chrystelle had been deceitful with them about wetting the bed. She had elevated herself to such a high position as one of the responsible 'single women' in the church, that she just could never own up to wetting the bed. Her pride was so great. She had been deceitfully covering it up, hiding her urine soaked nightgowns. Since she lives in the single women room, her mother does not keep that close tabs on her so she was able to go on like this for a couple weeks without it being discovered. Before Chrystelle realized that her mother knew about her deception, Denis asked her directly if she ever wet the bed any more and she flatly denied wetting. Then when everything was exposed she admitted what she had done to her parents. But Denis came to the elders, wondering if since she had been in deceit when she came to the Thanksgiving meal, if she would need to be brought before the church. Elbert felt that this would take away from the authority of the parent over his own child. He said that is very important that the authority of the parent always be supported in the church. A parent should deal with his own child as he sees fit. Their discipline problems should be handled between the parent and child. The child should not be brought to the table to confess their foolishness, bedwetting, deceit, etc., unless what they have done has effected the rest of the church, or caused another to stumble. Here, the table began to be used as a confessional. Elbert said that bringing confessions to the table, whether it be a child or an adult, should not be a

standard practice. Here, those who are easily condemned were continually bringing their petty confessions to the table in a sort of a forum. Then everyone would say, "We forgive you", and give that one a hug, and they would feel better. But this only brings temporary relief to the conscience, in the same way as the Roman Catholic confessionals do. This is not the true cleansing of the Holy Spirit. He has exhorted the adults to confess their sins to their Father in Heaven, and if it involves another individual, then confess it to him, but only in extreme cases to bring it to the table. The little baptized children had begun often confessing things at the table, without even the direction of their parents. They were copying what they saw the adults do. They enjoy 'being a big person.' This is every child's dream from the time they are 5 or 6 - to be a 'big person', to be treated like an adult, to be included in on all the 'big people things'..they want to dress like the big people, talk like the big people, imitate their ways...This is very common among children everywhere. This is not the Holy Spirit, but rather a natural inclination.*** They want to be the boss, rather than being the one who is always told what to do. Perhaps many of the children who are wanting to be baptized are wanting this 'adult position' rather than truly wanting the Salvation of their souls. We do not just automatically assume that a child who is baptized has received the Holy Spirit, but we observe the fruit of their lives. This fruit will not be a sudden "new maturity," which leaves us amazed that a 7 year old could be so suddenly grown up. This might seem nice at first, but when at 8 years old they begin to challenge your opinions and exalt their own, what is happening becomes more obvious. Children must always be treated as children, until they become men and women. A child is responsible to their parents. **A CHILD CAN ONLY GROW UP INTO THE HEAD THROUGH HIS PARENTS.** If he is truly baptized, the relationship between he and his parents will be even more closely established. It will not be that the child grows more independent from his parents. If you see this happening, then something is wrong. The Masse's and the Brosseau's have been very good examples of this. Their children became closer to their parents as the Holy Spirit began to work in their lives - many barriers were broken down. The children didn't strive to be recognized for their own merits, and opinions as this is the fruit of the 'I want to be a grown-up' spirit and not the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning the problem I spoke of earlier with Chrystelle, Elbert told Denis that this problem should be dealt with between he and his child. The trust relationship should be established between she and them. She should not feel as if her parents were going to betray here and go to the elders about all of her problems. She should trust them, and they should guard that trust. There may be times when it would be necessary to go to the elders, in some extreme case, such as with Nathan Wiseman, because that involved someone else. Even in some cases where deceit just goes on and on and the parent is not able to deal with it, it may be necessary to speak to the elders, but this would be a rare thing. The parent should usually deal with the child's sins privately - "guarding a matter" (Prov. 11:13). Coming before the household about your sin is an extreme discipline and should be used in cases where necessary, but if the table is overused then it becomes a mere form. Don't even let the weak adult who is condemned if he "belches," overuse the table for confession. This works to dull the church, and they learn to pass out their "I forgive you" too easily. One day a few weeks ago, Chrystelle came to the table and confessed some small incident that happened between herself and the other 2 baptized girls. She went into great detail about, and totally confused the table as everyone was

trying to get all the details straight. Everyone was just about to say, by rote, "We forgive you" when Elbert broke in and began to question the other children, "do you think that Chrystelle, is REALLY sorry?" He asked all the other children, and then made them each explain why they believed she was sorry. It was quite a long ordeal over something that seemed so insignificant, but it really put fear into both child and adult about just confession petty things at the table. He really questioned Chrystelle's sincerity in making her confession. This is before all this came out about Chrystelle's problems, but it was really the Holy Spirit warning us about a principle that had started in our midst. No one had told Chrystelle to speak at the table, she just somehow felt compelled to do it, as some sort of a show. It was an attention getting devise. Her pride would have been boosted as everyone heaped false forgiveness upon her.

Hopefully, when the housing situation gets a little better, we will be able to move the children out from the single men and women's rooms. At 11 years old, Samuel and Birgit are quite mature, but they still should not be given too much responsibility as an "independent entity" from their parents. Samuel is not old enough to disciple Uriah. Samuel is still very foolish himself, and he is learning to be a Pharisee with Uriah, in harshly disciplining him verbally when he is guilty of the same things. In one translation it says in Prov. 10:13, "the rod is for the back of a fool," and also Prov. 22:15 we see that the rod is the only solution for foolishness, not only reproof but both the rod and reproof. Foolishness is not a hopeless sin. It is bound up in the heart of every child. It is not something to get discouraged about because you see so much foolishness in a certain child, but it is something serious which must be dealt with as the scriptures teach us. Mark 7:21 - foolishness must be dealt with firmly and consistently for it defiles a man. Most of the adults in the church never had the foolishness driven out of their hearts, so it must be dealt with now in them at an older age when it is harder to get at. But it is serious as you can see by the list of things it is included with in Mark 7.

A couple times since we have been here we have had to talk with a brother or sister about certain sins they have fallen into that they want to confess. At these times, because of the seriousness of the matter, we always have the children go out, even the baptized ones, for they are not mature enough to judge such matters. Elbert does not want you to think that he is saying not to use your tables at all for confession, because it is a wonderful means of grace also, so I hope you can understand. One sister fell into sin and she confessed at the table (after the children were sent out), confessing the depth of her sin, it was a wonderful time of cleansing for her, plus the Father spoke to us all about the guilt we all shared in her sin, because before she fell she had asked several people for help, to talk to her or pray for her, but everyone had been too busy. After she fell many people realized how they had been too busy to be their brother's keeper and many repented with tears. So confession before all is very important and has benefits for the confessor and the hearer.

Everyone here loves you Arthur & Judy,

In Messiah,

Mars

***This is not wrong that a child has the desire to grow up, for we really desire for them to grow up to be responsible helpers in the church, but we cannot assume that just because they are baptized that the work of maturity has been completed in them. No, maturity must be 'worked into them', as they are little by little given more responsibility.

Even as it speaks of in 1 Tim. 5:22, about being careful not to lay hands on one too soon for a position of responsibility in the church, so it also applies to the children. This false maturity that we are talking about is not the true godly maturity which will happen as a young disciple takes on the mind of his father and mother, truly giving up of his whole being to be a servant in the church. It is a pseudo maturity which only leads to pride, Satan's sin.