

# Speaking to the soul



## Gift of family

**But those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers. 1 Timothy 5:8**

In days before the welfare state, caring for relatives could be a massive responsibility, but Paul was clear that it was fundamental to Christian faith. It was usual in his society for

families to care for one another, so it was crucial that the Christian Church didn't lag behind. He could hardly have been stronger in his language. If anyone neglected their family responsibilities, they were worse than an unbeliever. It was unthinkable.

Caring for our families is very different today. The state provides a huge range of care and pensions ensure that families are not alone in providing financial support for older people. Even so, the responsibility that families bear is still very great, and we should be grateful for the many charities that seek to help. One of them is Care for the Family, which offers a wide range of support for parenting, marriage and bereavement. However strong our families may be, there are times when we need encouragement, guidance and support from others.

Eva Burrows, a former General of the Salvation Army, wrote: "In family life, love is the oil that eases friction, the cement that binds closer together, and the music that brings harmony." These are great words, and families are a blessing, but that isn't the whole story. We all know that families can be extremely hard work at times and create some of the most difficult tensions and challenges. That's why churches need to be communities which actively support family life. We need to be honest with one another, joyfully celebrating the many times of joy and success but equally willing to share the times of brokenness and sadness.

For Paul, Christian faith was never simply a matter of believing the right things and worshipping with fellow Christians. It was about living for God amid the storms and

challenges of everyday life, and caring for the family was where it needed to begin.

## **QUESTION**

How has your Christian faith helped your understanding of family life?

## **PRAYER**

Lord God, we thank you for the gift of our families. Help us to love and support them through all the ups and downs of life. Amen

*Photo - Entrance to Portstewart Strand. A National Trust facility.*

