

Family Life is Important

Our civilization is disintegrating. The foundations are crumbling and falling. So many institutions are in danger of widespread decay, but no single danger is more serious than the decay of family life.

We still pay lip service to the sacredness of the home. Though there are not many who openly advocate the abolition of the family, the decay proceeds. The rate of divorce is rapidly increasing. In the U.S. there are 357 divorces for every 1,000 marriages. Many are not divorced but live separately. Common law "marriages" are becoming more common. Some speak in favour of trial marriages. Others claim that marriage is an old-fashioned custom. Family influence is diminishing. Young people leave home at a rather early age as our affluent society gives them that opportunity.

What happened to family life? We live in a hurried age. Many homes, where people have the same official residence, are really not homes at all. They share the same facilities, but that is as far as it goes.

Common meals become more and more infrequent as children and parents go their own way. As a result, unhurried family conferences, which used to be highlights in most homes, are out of the question. The shame of many a supposed home today is that it is largely a place where people sleep a part of the night, and where the laundry is done, but not really a scene of uniting the daily experiences of all members.

As our society becomes more and more non-Christian and as our environment boasts more and more of its casting off the old ways, because the new freedoms are supposed to be infinitely better, it is no wonder that people get distorted values.

Family life is no longer seen as a vocation. A man who cares more for his work than he cares for his wife and children has not succeeded in getting his values straight; he fails to realize where his first responsibility is.

A woman who is so concerned about her career that she entrusts her children in the care of others has not realized the real importance of motherhood. Very few subscribe to the idea that the mother ought to confine her duties solely to the four walls of the house, but, in rejecting one error we have tended to substitute another error for it.

The rearing of a family should be considered as a calling. This is what Mr. Montague so aptly wrote:

"It is, indeed, in the home that the foundations of the kind of world in which we live are laid, and in this sense it will always remain true that the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world. And it is in this sense that women must assume the job of making men who will know how to make a world fit for human beings to live in."

How can family life survive and be renewed? The power of renewal of the home comes from the Christian faith. If marriage is built on nothing more than an emotion or considered to be no more than a temporary contract or covenant, it will fail to fulfill its purpose.

Only through Scripture will we come to understand the real value of marriage. The Bible looks at the home not as a temporary but as a permanent institution.

The family is seen as the basic unit of society. Not the individual but the family is the foundation of society, and when we tamper with this foundation we are asking for trouble."

When a nation ceases to recognize that the family unit is its greatest preserver, that households and not persons are its strongest bond, and that blood and kindred are the only true cradle for human personality, then that nation is facing great peril.

The family is the foundation of human security, the true bastion of civilization, the social basis of the kingdom of God."

How can we have a true and happy home? First of all, Jesus Christ must be recognized as the Lord of life and of the home. When you have Christ as the center and the foundation of your home, you have the greatest source of help available.

He provided His people with the resources they need for living. A husband and wife who both believe in Jesus Christ will be able to overcome the tragedies and bear the burdens.

Secondly, a happy home is a disciplined home. Discipline seems to be a bad word in our permissive society. But permissiveness is selfishness.

We must reject openly and directly the heresy that encourages people to seek their own personal happiness, regardless of consequences and cost. Everything worth doing involves both hardship and self-denial.

To be permissive is to deny the God given responsibility of parenthood. Permissiveness is unknown when we desire to seek "the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God." A home that knows love will also accept discipline. The two belong together.

Happy the home when God is there,
And love fills every breast,
Where one their wish, and one their prayer,
And one their heavenly rest.

May God grant many homes like this. Our nation is as weak or as strong as its basic foundation – the family.

Has "Family" Lost Its Meaning?

Since the arrival of the refugees we are becoming acquainted with the term "extended family." This refers to solidarity of children, parents, grandparents and other relatives, plus the ancestors. The family is basically a small kinship structured group. For example, the Filipino value system stresses the individual within the context of the family. Social gatherings tend to be family oriented so that husband and wife can attend an affair together with either relatives or friends. Decisions are made within the context of the family. One does not act on his /her own. The family is also a social economic unit. It has its own built in security system. When a member of the family becomes unemployed, whether an uncle or a fourth cousin, the whole family lends support.

Marriage links not only two individuals, but also two kindred. Therefore, the choice of marriage partner involves the families on both sides. In Barrios, a newly married couple will move in with either set of parents for the first year of marriage until the first child is born. Then the couple generally moves into its own household. Aged parents find their financial and emotional security through their children. The oldest son or daughter may stay single until the schooling of a younger brother or sister is completed.

Traditional Southeast Asian cultures are more similar to those of the Bible than they are to Western civilization with its concept of the nuclear family. The Bible emphasizes the family and the New Testament challenges converts to the Christian faith to make the church a new family. Asian Christians have far less difficulty understanding the Biblical dynamics of the covenant than Western Christians.

We should not give up on the family. Instead, we must work together for stronger families. This calls for a return, in word and deed, to Biblical principles. According to the Bible, the family unit was the first institution in society. Since that time it has been the central unit of the social order. The family is not only the oldest institution, it is also universal. And it is the foundation upon which our society is built.

The Bible unfolds a picture of a society, which indeed is based on the family, which became a tribe and then a nation, and then was spread throughout all the earth. The first church was a family in a home. The first school was a home.

The Bible looks upon the family not as a temporary institution, but as permanent. The Bible has such a high view of the family that even our relationship to God is understood in family terms. God is called our Father through Jesus Christ the Lord. And Jesus Christ is called the bridegroom and the church the bride.

But a Christian home does not just happen. Something worthwhile in life never comes easy. A house is built with materials bricks, stones, wood and plaster. It is made with things and furnished with things. A Christian home is built with faith in the infinite personal God with love, unselfishness, consideration, praise and work. And strong family life can only exist when discipline is exercised.

The Bible teaches plainly that if parents spare the rod by refusing to punish their children when they do disobey, they will have only themselves to blame when their

children become juvenile delinquents. A family should have its financial priorities straight. When materialism is the driving force within the family, trouble can be expected.

The love of money has created havoc in many marriages. Money problems have been at the bottom of many family breakdowns. Furthermore, a family that claims to be Christian ought to read the Word of God together and pray together. Family devotions should be part of the routine of daily life. Good family life takes hard work, but it is rewarding. God has given standards for the family. It is time that we return to them.

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