



MARRIAGE & FAMILY

God's Good Plan

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Session 3

CHILDREN: A GIFT FROM THE LORD

- **Throughout the Bible, children are seen as a gift and a blessing of God. For example:**
- **Genesis 33:5 “Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. “Who are these with you?” he asked. Jacob answered, “They are the children God has graciously given your servant.”**
- **Psalm 127:3-5 “Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are the sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.”**



- **Proverbs 17:6 “Children’s children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.”**
- **Matthew 19:4 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”**



- **Let parents never forget that the chief reason for having children is to raise “Godly offspring” (Malachi 2:15) in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4) carrying the hope that when they are old they will not depart from how they were raised (Proverbs 22:6).**
- **Let us pray that we heed the words of the prophet Malachi that the hearts of fathers will turn to their children and the hearts of children will turn to their fathers (Malachi 4:6) who have sought to remain true and raise their children in the Christian faith. If this does not happen, as was foretold, destruction will certainly follow.**



- **As Christians, we are to strive to see life as God sees it, not as the world sees life or as we see it based upon our past experiences.**
- **In fact, if we hold to what are called the “ordinances of creation” found in Genesis chapters 1-2, God emphatically tells us to “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.” (Genesis 1:28). This command by God is not limited to a specific period of time or for a particular culture, but for all of time and place. This is not an optional command in our lives.**



❖ *Yet, one may say, “Get real, the earth has now been filled; in fact, there is a population problem in many parts of the world with many people starving. Surely, this ‘command’ by God is no longer valid.”*



- **It could certainly be agreed that in many parts of the world there appears to be an overpopulation problem. Yet, there are also other parts of the world with a below-zero population growth (e.g. many European countries) dependent upon immigration just to sustain their economies.**
- **The problem is that of “responsible reproduction”, rather than either that of overproduction or no production of children.**
- **While Christians should be aware of the problems associated with world overpopulation and be responsible in their decision to have children, one must understand that “overpopulation” is not a pressing problem in the vast majority of traditionally westernized “Christian” world.**



- **One cannot overlook the fact that one of the primary reasons for the increase of non-Christians in the world is that many non-Christians, such as Muslims, are having several children while many Christians are having few, if any, children (although projected to decline, Muslims represent the second highest birth rate after sub-Saharan Africa – *Asia Times Online, August 2005*)**



- **If a married couple is unable to reproduce (i.e. approximately one out of five or six couples are unable to reproduce), there is the wonderful opportunity to adopt children that otherwise would have no parents.**
- **This is in reference to the fact that one of the primary ways that God has historically furthered His purposes is through His people bearing and raising children up for Him.**
- **While we certainly support the evangelization of the world of those who do not grow up in Christian families, we cannot dismiss the importance of bearing and bringing up our own children in the Christian faith.**



➤ ***Regretfully, too many people in our modern world do not regard children as God does, but see children as an obstacle to independence, a burden to freedom, a hindrance to careers or goals, or even a downright pain to have around!***



PARENTING BASICS

- **As a Christian parent, it is immediately noted that we should, as much as possible, raise our children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Applying this, of course, is an on-going challenge.**
- **Even so, the evangelization and discipleship of our children is one of the most important responsibilities of being a Christian parent.**
- **Sadly, we sometimes find that in many Christian homes, encouraging one’s children in coming to a personal faith in Christ and their developing a close walk with Him is at times taken for granted, often to the peril of their children’s own souls.**



- **On a practical level, however, we find that a few reminders are in order. It is important that a parent be both available as well as approachable in relating to their children.**
- **Other helpful aspects of parenting are providing consequences and consistency.**



- **Often parents make promises or give warnings without realistic consequences to back their statements. In addition, a real problem is in not being consistent in our words and actions.**
- **Without real consequences and without holding to consistency children may see their parents as not being “credible” and respect is greatly diminished.**
- **Respect is more difficult to regain once lost.**



PARENTING ROLES

- **The Scriptures instruct married women to first concentrate on the domestic responsibilities of a household and that of raising children. In the Bible the Greek words “oikodespoteo” (I Timothy 5:14) and “oikouros” ((Titus 2:5) as prescribed to wives reflect the notion of “keeping”, “managing”, or even “staying at” home and are only used in the New Testament in this context.**



- **The Greek word “proisteemi” given to husbands reflects the notion of “rule” or “direct” and is used not only in regards to the home (I Timothy 3:4-5,12) but also to other matters involving authority (Romans 12:8; I Thessalonians 5:12; I Timothy 5:17). This, however, is not to say that fathers are not to be intimately involved in child-raising. This is strongly prescribed in the Scriptures (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).**



- **It must be recognized that if men are to model Christ (Ephesians 5:25-30), one of their responsibilities as husbands and fathers is to make provision for their families.**
- **While home-based economies are to be encouraged where husbands as well as wives are involved together economically within the domicile of the home, if either party has little choice but to leave the home for any extended time in order to provide economically, more allowance would be made for fathers to do so than to mothers.**



- **Even so, this is not to say that wives cannot be economically active outside the home or to utilize their gifts, abilities, or education in the marketplace. Even the “P-31 wife” was economically active outside her home (Proverbs 31: 24) and Lydia was a “dealer in purple cloth” (Acts 16:14).**
- **Nevertheless, one cannot just overlook the context in which these women lived and merely justify the present state in westernized life where all too many homes constantly lay “empty” of wives and mothers throughout much of the day. One must acknowledge that the economies of biblical times were very much home-based and even where women were economically active (as most women were) this should not be interpreted to mean that their homes were continually empty of their presence.**



- **In the New Testament quite stern language directed toward fathers in their parenting role. Fathers are specifically called to not “exasperate” (irritate, annoy, provoke, enrage) their children, but instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).**
- **In addition, fathers are instructed to not “embitter” their children, lest they become discouraged (Colossians 3:21)**



- **Thus, the emphasis for fathers is not to be overbearing, demanding or expecting too much, “pressing the buttons” that would promote children becoming frustrated or angry.**
- **Often, fathers, in their noble attempts in trying to help their children to “make something of themselves” rather than becoming lazy or purposeless in life, may tend to push their children to the point of discouragement or even despair.**
- **So while it is important for mothers to remain close to their children as primary nurturers in the home, fathers are deemed as extremely important in providing direction for their children.**



- **THE FOLLOWING BOOK TITLE IS WRITTEN BY A FAMOUS SOCIAL ACTIVIST:**

A PRACTICAL VIEW OF THE PREVAILING RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF PROFESSED CHRISTIANS IN THE HIGHER AND MIDDLE CLASSES IN THIS COUNTRY, CONTRASTED WITH REAL CHRISTIANITY (ORIGINAL TITLE)



“I hope you don’t think I am being arrogant or overly harsh on cultural Christians. Look at the facts. Do cultural Christians view Christian faith as important enough to make a priority when teaching their children what they believe and why they believe it? Or do they place greater emphasis on their children getting a good education than on learning about the things of God? Would they be embarrassed if their children did not possess the former while basically being indifferent about the latter? If their children have any understanding of Christian faith at all, they probably have acquired it on their own. If the children view themselves as Christians, it is probably not because they have studied the facts and come to a point of intellectual conviction but because their family is Christian, so they believe they must be Christian also.



The problem with this way of thinking is that authentic faith cannot be inherited. When Christianity is viewed in this way, intelligent and energetic young men and women will undoubtedly reach a point where they question the truth of Christianity and, when challenged, will abandon this “inherited” faith that they cannot defend. They might begin to associate with peers who are unbelievers. In this company, they will find themselves unable to respond to objections to Christianity with which they are confronted. Had they really known what they believe and why they believe it, these kinds of encounters would not shake their faith one bit.”

I fear for the future of authentic faith in our country....”



William Wilberforce (1797)

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20.)

