

10.10.2020 THE FAMILY

“My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother.” Proverbs 1:8

God has given us instruction about every aspect of life in the Scriptures. When we look at the laws governing all of life, we find that they are ‘design laws’ i.e. God has designed these laws and if we live in harmony with His design, we shall have abundant life.

God has a design for marriage and the family. The Bible gives us His design for marriage and the family. We shall look at:

1. Marriage (without which there are no Christian families).
2. The Role of Parents
3. The Role of Children

Marriage:

Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. Gen. 2:22- 24:

God brought her to the man.... She is ‘flesh of his flesh’... Therefore, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, leaving the dependency and nurture of childhood into the maturity of partnership.

...And they shall become one flesh. Because they are again ‘one flesh’ marriage is indissoluble. It is a covenantal union, not just between a man and a woman; it involves the God of the universe who has joined them together. Christ affirmed God’s plan for marriage when He was on earth: ‘*What God has joined together, let not man separate*’ Mark 10:9, Matthew 19:6. See also Proverbs 2:17, Malachi 2:14-16. The Bible is clear about this. God has ‘yoked’ them together, they are ‘one flesh’ and ‘what God has joined together, no man must separate.

‘Human conduct which falls short of the absolute command of God is sin and stands under the Divine judgement. The provisions which God’s mercy has designed for limiting the consequences of man’s sin must not be interpreted as divine approval for sinning.’

In the above verses are found what commentators call ‘The Universal Law of Marriage’.

1. The responsibility of marriage is on the man’s shoulders; he is to leave ‘father and mother’.
2. The responsibility of keeping the union together is on the man’s shoulders; he is to be ‘joined unto his wife’.
3. The union cannot be dissolved: the two ‘shall become one flesh’.

Marriage is a witness to the world of the CHARACTER of the Godhead. In Christian marriage, both husband and wife must demonstrate to the world the unconditional, unending, self-giving love of God. They must demonstrate the unity that lies within the Godhead, 3 persons united in purpose and love. Every Christian marriage has 3 persons in it – the husband, wife and Holy Spirit; a three-fold cord that is not easily broken. When children are born, there must be a demonstration of the fatherhood (Deut 32:18) and motherhood (Isaiah 49:15) of God.

Wives and Mothers:

“A father can give his sons homes and riches, but only the Lord can give them understanding wives” Proverbs 19:14

A good wife:

- Is a helper suitable for her husband – Genesis 2:18, 20.
- Is a crown to her husband – Proverbs 12:4
- A companion – Malachi 2:14
- loves her husbands, loves her children, is discreet, chaste, a good homemaker, good, obedient to her own husbands – Titus 2:4, 5
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The Bible gives us examples of:

Sarah, an obedient wife. 1 Peter 3:5, 6
Hannah, a praying wife. 1 Samuel 1:1-15
Abigail, a prudent and intercessory wife. 1 Samuel 25:3, 14-35
Elizabeth, a righteous wife. Luke 1:5, 6
Ruth, a virtuous wife. Ruth 3:11

Husbands and Fathers:

It is not enough to desire a wife that is a comfort and help to a man. A Christian man seeks to follow God's will in being a husband and father like the heavenly Husband and Father.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her... So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. Ephesians 5:25, 28

"And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah; and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters". Gen. 5:21-22.

A wise father:

- Trusts in God. Psalm 22:4
- Fears the Lord. 14:26
- Tells his children the wonderful works of God. Psalm 78:3
- Provides for his children. Proverbs 13:22; 19:14
- Is slow to anger. Proverbs 16:32
- Is content with what he has. Proverbs 15:27
- Corrects his children. Proverbs 29:17

The Role of Parents

We do not own our children. They are God's good gifts to us. We are but stewards who are entrusted with leading our children to Christ and helping them choose to become citizens of God's kingdom.

The Joys and Responsibilities of Parenting:

We are not left to fend for our own when it comes to raising children. The Bible has many instructions for parents.

1. For the children to be right, the home must be right. Deuteronomy 6:4-9

- a. There must be a revelation of God...*'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.'*6:4.
- b. There must be a response to God...*And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*6:5
- c. There is a responsibility: As parents, God's Word must be in our heart (6:6); God's Word must be taught to our children (6:7) and God's Word must govern our conduct (6:8, 9)

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 6:7

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:8, 9

2. Remind your children constantly of God's goodness. Psalm 78:1-7

Remind them of God's work in general (Creation and Salvation) and in particular towards you and your family.

That which we have heard and known and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done...that

the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments. Psalm 78:3-4, 6-7

3. Train up a child in the way he should go. Proverbs 22:6

In childhood: A child's concept of God is primarily obtained from his parents. To a child, his parents' values reflect God's values and character. That is why it is so important that God's Word is in our hearts and governs our behaviour.

Older Children (pre-teens/mid-teens): Children begin to test God's values against their parent's values. Are their parent's values the same as God's values, or do they follow the values of modern society?

Late teens/Young adult: Children decide whether the God of their parents will be their God.

"It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Matthew 18:14

4. Communication

'My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother' Proverbs 1:8...

As parents we need to recognise that we must give godly instruction to our children. But communication is more than just teaching them the Bible. We need to communicate to our children, both verbally and non-verbally, that they are unconditionally loved and that we desire what is best for them, physically, mentally, socially and spiritually.

In the parents' unconditional love, they will get a glimpse of the God who loves them unconditionally and who accepts them 'just as they are'; the God who wants only the best for them and their future.

5. Cooperate with others involved in your children's' education – pastors, school teachers.

'The teacher's work should supplement that of the parents, but is not to take its place. In all that concerns the well-being of the child, it should be the effort of parents and teachers to co-operate. The work of co-operation should begin with the father and mother themselves, in the home life. In the training of their children they have a joint responsibility, and it should be their constant endeavour to act together. Let them yield themselves to God, seeking help from Him to sustain each other. Parents who give this training are not the ones likely to be found criticizing the teacher. They feel that both the interest of their children and justice to the school demand that, so far as possible, they sustain and honour the one who shares their responsibility. Many parents fail here. By their hasty, unfounded criticism the influence of the faithful, self-sacrificing teacher is often well-nigh destroyed. *Education: p. 283*

6. Discipline/ Teaching Children to make correct choices by exercising their free will.

We have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:9-11

Discipline or 'discipling' is essential in parenting. The passage above tells us what the true purpose of discipline is; it is moral in its nature. Many parents make the mistake of thinking their child must be given free-will from infancy. But the human will is self-centred and tainted by sin. Before the age of reasoning, before the child '*knows to refuse the evil and choose the good*' Isaiah 7:16, we are called to train the will. The godly parent recognises that every child has a sinful nature and the tendencies of the nature must be curbed lovingly but firmly in childhood. When the child reaches the age of reason, he will choose the good because his parents have explained to him the reasons why making the right choices are best (as opposed to demanding or forcing the child to obey them without any explanation – this is called 'animal discipline' not moral discipline, because it is the way we discipline animals).

As God teaches us to submit our wills to a greater Will (His) for our good, so Christian parents must train their children to submit their wills to their parents for their good. In obeying the Christian parent, the child will learn true obedience and as he grows up to independence, will know the importance of submitting his will to God, his heavenly Father.

Obedience must not be exacted or demanded harshly, but with the authority of love. Love will draw our children near to us and near to God.

7. Teaching Responsibility

Children need to grow to be responsible adults. Parents are integral to teaching and training children responsibility. From a young age they can be given little chores in the house; as they grow older, they can be involved in some of the decision making that goes on in any family. This gives them the feeling that they are involved and important to the family. To a large extent, it protects them from going to unsuitable peers to get that sense of importance and worth.

8. A Time to Let them Go

'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother...' Genesis 2:24

Our children are our children for only a short while. God gives them to us for the great joy they bring us. But He also reminds us that after we have raised them to adulthood, they will leave us when they are emotionally and financially independent of us (as we left our own parents). This is also God's plan for families.

Many parents seem to be unable to 'let go' of their children. Wise parents prepare themselves for the time when their children will fly the nest. If God (instead of our children) comes first in our lives, it will be easier to let them go.

The Role of Children

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." Ephesians 6:1-3

Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Psalm 34:11

Conclusion:

Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth. Everyone who is called by My name; whom I have created for My glory. Isaiah 43:6, 7

True wisdom comes from following God's will and His Word and not being led by our own desires and preferences. This is true of marriage and family life in particular.

'God Himself is the essence of true love and He is the One Who created sex and ordained marriage. He alone can therefore tell us what love really means, and how sex and marriage can be used for our greatest good. What God has said in His Word, we shall find is contrary to much that this world teaches on this subject. But the teaching of God's Word is like a rock. He who builds his life on it can never fall - no storm or earthquake will ever shake him.' *Zac Poonen*.

May we live in the consciousness that we are not our own. We have been created to display to the world the glory of God in our individual lives, in our marriages, in our families and in the church.

'Until there is a passion for the supremacy and the glory of God in the hearts of married people, marriage will not be lived for the glory of God. And there will not be a passion for the supremacy and the glory of God in the hearts of married people until God Himself, in His manifold glories, is known. And He will not be known in His manifold glories until pastors and teachers speak of him tirelessly and constantly and deeply and Biblically and faithfully and distinctly and thoroughly and passionately. Marriage lived for the glory of God will be the fruit of churches permeated with the glory of God.

So I say again, if believers in Jesus want marriage to glorify the truth and worth and beauty and greatness of God, we must teach and preach less about marriage and more about God. Not that we preach too much on marriage, but that we

preach too little on God. Knowing God and cherishing God and valuing the glory of God above all things, including your spouse, will be the key to living your marriage to the glory of God. It's true in marriage, as in every other relationship: God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.' *John Piper: Preparing for Marriage.*

Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it. Psalm 127:1
