

Family Life for Every Disciple

AIM - November 16, 2007

The Vitality of the Family

Presented by Sam and Geri Laing

I. Family is not an afterthought, or a social convention, but is essential and fundamental in the plan of God, and He has much to say about it in Scripture.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name... (Ephesians 3: 14-15)

In Ephesians 5: 22-6:4, the most extensive passage in the NT (NIV) on marriage and family, it is noteworthy that in 15 verses, there are 12 references to Jesus. Christ is to be at the center of marriage and family, and we ignore God's plan and instruction to our peril!

II. Four great purposes of marriage:

- A. Companionship ("not good... to be alone")
- B. Foundation of accomplishment ("helper")
- C. Fulfillment of Sexuality ("one flesh")
- D. Environment for bearing & raising children ("be fruitful and increase in number")

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number..." (Genesis 1:27-28)

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. (Genesis 2:18-24)

III. Family in the Plan of God

The home is where we are intended to learn the most important lessons of life.

A. Our view of God

1. From the teaching children receive (Deut. 6: 4-9; "when your son asks you" - Exodus 13: 1-10; Judges 2: 7-10)
2. From the example of the father of the family
 - a. love, justice, compassion, firmness, forgiveness, etc.
 - b. proper leadership of wife & children shows heart and "method" of God

B. Respect for, adjustment to, authority (Ephesians 6: 1-4, Deut. 5: 16)

C. The great stories of families in the OT

Are helpful, instructive and enlightening, sometimes on how NOT to build a family.

1. Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1ff.)
2. Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 16:1 ff, note 25: 18)
3. Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25: 19ff.)
4. Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37:1ff) (Note the continuity of family conflict through generations.)
5. David and his children (2 Samuel 11:1ff)

D. Relating to others

Others in our family (and, later, in the world around us, and in the church) are there whether we like it or not, and we must learn to get along, to cope, to make allowances.

1. Learning to share
2. Dealing with envy and jealousy
3. Learning to apologize, reconcile
4. Learning to get along with difficult and different personalities
5. Learning to assert ourselves properly
6. Learning to serve, to do our part, to work
7. Learning manners
8. Masculine respect for women (father for mother); how to lead in a Christ-like manner
9. Respect and submission as a follower (mother to father); how to follow in a church-like manner

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Dating and Marriage

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I. Dating and the Christian Life

A. Dating as practiced in the US today was not existent in the social climate or culture of Bible times

1. Dating is a modern phenomenon
2. Modern disciples who date must use the Bible to guide their actions and attitudes.

B. We should be informed by the example of Isaac (Gen. 24).

1. Was willing to wait - had faith that God would lead
2. Went to great lengths to find the right wife. - a godly and spiritual woman

C. Dating is:

1. a way to get to know others of the opposite sex
2. a way to socialize and have fun
3. a means of finding a marriage partner

II. A Christian must marry only another Christian

A. OT examples: See Ezra 9 and 10 and Nehemiah 13: 23ff for examples intermarriage, and God's proscription.

B. NT

1.1 Cor 7: 39

2. 2 Cor. 6: 14-7:1 Applies specifically to union or partnership with idolaters, but the application to the marriage is obvious. There is no "yoke" more intimate or binding than the marriage relationship.

a. notes

- "unbeliever" = non-Christian
- "Believer" refers to one truly committed to Christ, not just one who possesses intellectual faith (James 2:14ff)
- A Christian is someone "in Christ,"
- Who is "in Christ"?- (Rom 6: 1ff, Col. 2:12, Gal. 3:26-27, Acts 2:38)
- Unity *in the faith* is the single most important issue of unity in marriage (Eph. 4: 1-6).

C. My position:

1. Marrying outside the faith is a sin. Likewise, Christians engaging to marry non-Christians is wrong because it is a promise to do that which God forbids.

2. The Bible is silent on the subject of dating, so we must form our convictions based upon wisdom derived from careful application of Biblical principles. Dating outside the faith is *at best* very unwise and ill-advised, and is fraught with peril. There is great temptation to compromise sexually, and for emotion to cause us to rationalize or weaken in our convictions about whom to marry.

III. Testing a Relationship

Those who are dating a Christian and considering marriage to them may test the relationship in the following ways, realizing that these are, to varying degrees, matters of judgment. (See the Appendix of *Friends and Lovers* for the full development of these concepts.)

The Test of Spirituality

- Does this person love God more than anybody or anything else in the world?
- Is this person seeking the kingdom of God first in his or her life?
- Does being with this person cause me to love God more?
- Does being with this person cause me to love other Christians and the church more?
- Do we bring out the best in each other?
- Am I a better person with him or her than I am otherwise?

The Test of Compatibility

- Do you in your relationship easily take on the prescribed roles of Ephesians 5: 22-33?
- Do you get along well, do you have a friendship? Is there peace, or do you constantly argue? Have you been able to resolve disagreements during your courtship?
- Although marriage is not based upon sexual attraction, is it there? Does he think she is beautiful and she think he is handsome? (See Song of Songs)
- Are you convinced that this is "the one" with whom you wish to spend your life?

The Test of Purity

- Have you kept your relationship sexually pure? 1 Thess. 4: 3-8
- Do both of you have a conscience about sexual purity, and strive to build your relationship upon holiness?

The Test of Longevity

- Have you given yourself enough time to be sure you know this person well, and how you feel about them?

The Test of Society

- Do you feel the same way about this person when you are with them and around other people as you do when you are alone with them?

The Test of Economy

- Is he willing to support her, financially, and is he disciplined, responsible and able to make a living? (See 2 Thess. 3: 6-10)
- Are you both in agreement on the basic lifestyle you will be willing to live with economically?

IV. Conclusion

Someone once said that whom we choose to marry has more influence upon our eternal destiny than any other decision we make in life. Only the decision to make Jesus our Lord is more important. Let us approach this vital decision with faith, with patience, and with a heart of wisdom. Let us seek the Lord's will above all else - he knows what, and who, is best for us!