

Chapter 11

CHRISTIAN FAMILY 1

INTRODUCTION

- I. The home or the family is the basic unit of human society. Throughout history we see the use of tribes, clans, and families. It is not first of all a cultural concept, but rather a universal concept of human relation. "...all the families of the earth..."(Genesis 12:3 AV)
 - A. The family unit has its basis in the plan of God. God established the first family unit as a pattern for all further generations. There is no better place than the family to produce the ways of God in people that will have a positive effect on the world around us. The family is the best place to share and demonstrate the love of God. Unfortunately, the family also has the power through abuse and neglect to cause much lasting harm to a person. (Genesis 2:18, 23-24)
 - B. God introduced himself into the human realm through a family unit. Jesus came into and through a family unit. God trusted Mary and Joseph with His Son, his only Son. (Luke 2:43-44, 51)
 - C. The Godhead is pictured for us as a relationship of Father and Son, characterized by love. From this picture we can realize that God really does understand having a family identity. (John 3:16; John 17:1,21)
 - D. The family relationship is used to illustrate the highest of all relationships; that of Christ and the church (joining the human and the divine). (Ephesians 5:22-23)
- II. God has purpose, order, and provision for every family. The first purpose of God is that man and woman are to be joined together, leaving father and mother and to become one flesh. Also, as a couple to be fruitful and multiply and replenish. God also intended for the family to be a blessing, to be an influence or even to be a living picture for the world to see the goodness of God. (Genesis 1:28; Genesis 2:24)
 - A. Order is a characteristic of everything God does. We have evening and morning, seedtime and harvest, and responsibility and authority as examples of His orderly way of doing things. Beyond that God has order for all relationships: citizens and the government, the church and its leaders, employer and employee, and, of course, the family.

God's Word establishes the authority, responsibility, structure, order, and pattern for the family unit. God gives clear instruction for the relationship between husband and wife and their children. The husband is meant to be the spiritual head of the family with the wife responding to his leadership. The husband and wife together as the parents govern the children. The children are then to respond to and grow under the guidance and leadership of the parents. We see that God has a clear and definite commandment to every member of the family unit. (Luke 2:51; Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21)
 - B. God provides for our obedience and fulfillment of His plan in several ways. First, He

clearly establishes responsibility for each one of us in the family. Then we can be assured that He has placed His nature within us, which is the nature of obedience. And then even beyond that He gives grace for every situation that we face or are in. God has been faithful to provide specific instruction on how to obey His will. God does command obedience from us. But then He provides the resources and expects and enables success. God's commandment presupposes God's provision. He won't command us to do what He can't or won't enable us to do.

- III. What are the various relationships (mutual dealings, connections, feelings that exist between two groups of people) as God has established them in the Christian family?
- A. There are several relationship levels and combinations in the Christian family. Each type of relationship has different responsibilities, commitments, and instructions. There are also levels of priority in these relationships within the family that vary from person to person and from level to level.
 - B. The first relationship combination is the man and the woman. If they are married with children their first priority is their relationship as husband and wife. Their second priority then is that of father and mother. With the children in the family their first priority relationship is with their parents and then with their siblings.
 - 1. The husband and wife relationship is the foundation, the core, the root of the family unit. It must come first in order of priority.
 - 2. Out of a healthy husband and wife relationship there will proceed a healthy parent and child relationship.
 - 3. The parent and child relationship must find expression through a husband and wife who have become "one" and deal with the child or children as one unit...as "parents."
- IV. What is the parents' responsibility and authority to their children within the Christian family unit? What requirements does God's plan for successful families place on the parents? The keynote, the motive, is to be love; we are to love our children first. God as our Father loves us and because of that love He provides for us, teaches us and as necessary He will correct and discipline us. Then because of our love for our children we will fulfill the following responsibilities:
- A. We will provide for their needs. The wants and needs of our children are not always the same. It is the parents responsibility to find a balance in providing for their needs as well as supplying some of their wants. (1 Timothy 5:8)
 - B. We as parents are also to teach, train, and discipline our children. There is order and process in doing this for our children. We tell them first what we expect, we show them how to do it, and then provide the discipline that will help them do it and do it in the right way. (Proverbs 22:6)
 - C. We as parents have the privilege of stimulating and nourishing our child's creative potential and then helping them to find fulfillment using their God-given potential. Begin to look for God's grace gifts in their lives and then help them learn to express these gifts. Give them and even make opportunities for them to grow and learn to express their gifts. (2 Timothy 1:6)

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

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1. Discuss some reasons that you believe God chose family as the basic unit of society and then allowed for His Son to be born into a family, to be raised by them, and from there go out to begin His ministry.
2. What are some of the ways that you can see the family being an example or picture of God and His ways for the world to observe? How can we effectively develop these ways or qualities in our families?