



Marriage and the Family

“Wives, submit yourself unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:18-20).

A sheep had tiny triplets—too many for one ewe. His stronger brothers pushed aside the puny, weak one from his mother’s milk. Busy with the other two, the mother seemed unconcerned that the little one was starving to death.

The shepherd found another ewe bleating as if her heart would break, while standing beside her dead lamb. He took the little body from the grieving mother, and brought her the starving triplet. The sorrowing mother smelled it and turned her back. The hungry baby edged up to her, but she pushed it away. He wasn’t hers.

Knowing they both would die, the shepherd quickly skinned the dead lamb, and trimmed away all the meat. Cutting it down to the size of the weak, living lamb, he carefully tied the skin around its neck and legs. Then he carried it to the mourning mother. As soon as she smelled the skin, she snuggled up to the lamb. She accepted the lamb and nursed it. Accepted, loved, and no longer an outcast, the little fellow improved. He followed his adopted mother everywhere. Soon he was frisking about, and the false skin was discarded.

Have you ever felt unloved, misunderstood, lonely, even forsaken by someone in your family? If an earthly shepherd can bring a forsaken lamb to a grieving mother, surely Jesus can bring you close to those in your family who seem to have rejected you.

Preview

Jesus said, “But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:6-9).

Peter Marshall, speaking about marriage, once stated, “When we really fall in love, it isn’t just physical attraction. If it is just that, it won’t last. Ideally, it’s also spiritual attraction. God has opened our eyes and let us see into someone’s soul. We have fallen in love with the inner person....That’s why God is the greatest asset to romance. He thought it up in the first place. Include Him in every part of your marriage, and he will lift it above the level of the mundane to something rare and beautiful and lasting.”

Points to Ponder

1. God established the family. Why?

God places us in a family to increase our happiness and fellowship. If you don’t live in a family, you can still find joy and companionship by being part of the Christian family of God.

2. I should marry someone who believes the same as I do. Why?
Partners who share a common faith and practice have fewer problems and more in common and both help each other in their mutual goals. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)
3. Divorce is not in God's plan. Why?
Marriage is sacred because God has sealed the union. God wants the marriage to be indissoluble until death. Christ said that Moses permitted divorce, "because of the _____ of your _____" (see Matthew 19:8).

Nuts & Bolts

1. What did God say about His plan to create Adam?
Genesis 1:26, 27: "Let us make _____ in our _____, after our _____; let them have _____ over the _____ of the _____, and over the _____ of the _____, and over the _____, and over all the _____, and over every _____ thing that _____ upon the earth."
2. Why did God want Adam to have a companion?
Genesis 2:18: "It is not good that the man should be _____; I will _____ him an _____ for him." Ellen White comments: "Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46).
3. How did God establish the first home?
Genesis 2:24: "Therefore shall a _____ leave his father and his mother, and shall _____ unto his _____: and they shall be _____ flesh." "One flesh" suggests an intimate bond of body, mind, and emotions.
4. What counsel does Paul give about who one should not select as a spouse?
2 Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not _____ yoked together with _____: for what _____ has _____ with _____? and what _____ hath light with _____?" True oneness demands an agreement in beliefs, values, practices, and lifestyle.
5. Is divorce an option for Christians?
Matthew 19:6: "What therefore _____ hath _____ together, let no _____ _____."

6. What restrictions did Jesus place upon divorce?

Matthew 19:9: "Whosoever shall _____ his wife, except it be for _____, and shall _____ another, committeth _____; and whoso _____ her which is put _____ doth commit _____."

7. If divorce is not an option, what else might be considered by incompatible spouses?

1 Corinthians 7:10, 11: "Let not the wife _____ depart from her _____; but and if she depart let her remain _____, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the _____ put away his _____."

8. What does God say about parental responsibilities?

Proverbs 22:6: " _____ up a child in the _____ he should _____; and when he is _____, he will not _____ from it."

9. Read Deuteronomy 6:7-9 and then list what God expects of parents to do for their children.

10. What duties do children have in a Christian home?

Exodus 20:12: _____

11. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. List six qualities of love that you are attracted to:

- a. Love is _____
- b. Love is _____
- c. Love is _____
- d. Love is _____
- e. Love is _____
- f. Love is _____

Words to Remember

Covenant: In marriage a commitment between husband and wife to remain faithful and loving to each other.

Agape love: Selfless, sacrificing, other-centered love. Similar to the love God has for sinners.

Family: A social unit between husband and wife, bonded by true love. Children are part of the family.

Homosexuality: Sexual desire or behavior directed toward a person of one's own sex.

Love: A profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person.

Marriage: A God-ordained institution under which a man and a woman are united in love and marriage to establish a home.

The Difference Between

Leave and cleave: The marriage relationship (cleaving) supersedes even that of a parent-child relationship (leaving).

Adultery: Sexual relationship of a married person outside of marriage.

Fornication: Premarital sexual relationship between unmarried persons.

Incest: Sexual relations between persons closely related.

I Truly Believe

In 1989 an 8.2 earthquake almost flattened Armenia, killing over 30,000 people in less than four minutes. Surrounded by devastation and chaos, a father rushed to his son's school. The building was gone—just a heap of rubble.

In shock he remembered the promise he'd made to his son. "No matter what, I'll always be there for you!" Tears filled his eyes as he gazed at the pile of debris. It looked hopeless, but his commitment to his son filled his mind. Trying to concentrate, he recalled that his son's classroom was in the back right corner of the building. He rushed to the spot and began digging through the rubble.

Other forlorn parents arrived, all weeping. One well-meaning father tried to pull him away, saying, "It's too late! They're all dead. You can't help. Go home." Others added, "Face reality. There's nothing you can do. You're just making things worse!"

To each one the father responded, "Are you going to help me now?" And he proceeded to dig, stone by stone.

The fire chief tried to pull him off the debris, saying, "Fires are breaking out, explosions are everywhere. You're in danger. We'll take care of things. Go home."

To which the loving father replied, "Are you going to help me now?"

A policeman grabbed him, "You're angry, distraught, endangering others. Go home, and let us handle things."

But he replied again, "Are you going to help me now?"

No one helped him, but he kept on digging. 8 hours...12 hours...24 hours...36 hours. He must know if his son was dead or alive. In the 38th hour he pulled back a boulder and heard voices. He screamed, "Armand!" He heard back, "Dad, it's me. I told the other kids not to worry. I told them that if you were alive, you'd save me—and when you saved me, they'd be saved too. You promised that 'no matter what, I'll always be there for you!' You did it, Dad!"

"How is it with you?" the father called.

"Fourteen of us are left out of thirty-three, Dad. We're scared, hungry, thirsty, and thankful you're here. When the building collapsed, it made a wedge like a triangle, and it saved us."

"Crawl out, boys, through the hole."

"No, Dad! Let the other kids out first, because I know you'll get me! No matter what, I know you'll be there for me!"

Is your love like God's—unconditional and sacrificial? Can you say with God, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3)?

Think carefully about each of the following commitments. If you truly believe, place a check in the box preceding the statement:

- I believe marriage is a life-long commitment between a man and a woman.
- I believe marriage should be entered into only by two people who share a common faith.
- I believe Christian parents should love and respect their children, training them to love God and their fellow men.
- I believe that my home—and I—should be an example to others.

My Prayer

Dear Father,

Thank You for what the Bible has revealed to me about marriage, family life, and parenting responsibilities. Help me to make any changes necessary in my lifestyle so that I will reflect Christ daily. By the Holy Spirit's power, enable me to be like Jesus in everything I do. Amen.