Bible Study: God's Plan for the Family

Husband and Wife / Parents

As God created all things, He also instituted the family. We will consider, in this study, what His plans are for the family. After all, if He established it, He would be the best source of information on how the family should function.

Read Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:21-24. Describe the family God began here. What members of the family are listed? One wit pointed out that we find, at creation, God created one man and one woman; He didn't make Adam, Eve - and Sue just in case. Nor was it Adam, Eve and Sam just in case. How does this picture of family compare with the world's understanding of family? Compare this with the definitions allowed by the "White House Conference on Families", mentioned in this month's 'World View'. What did God say about the first family in Genesis 1:31?

The first member of a family we meet is the husband/father. He has many responsibilities, or duties, in his position. What is he to do according to Deuteronomy 6:4-7? How much of this is commonly done in today's family? Consider why this is as it is. What does the preceding presuppose about the family's head? Read Psalm 128 for insights into what he is to be like. In Job 1:5 we find another aspect of the responsibilities of the family head. Read 1. Timothy 2:8 to see another duty he has. How can these be brought back into our family lives today?

Within the family, the husband/father is to be a teacher and example. He is also to be a provider. Read Genesis 3:19 and 1. Thessalonians 4:11-12. What do these say about supporting the family? How do they address the multitude of "easy money" programs and contests that are becoming ever more a part of our culture? The easy money doesn't solve any problems. Underlying views remain as they were, and the problems just have more areas in which to show themselves. (In Washington state, a million dollar lottery winner - collecting $40,000 per year - was recently captured while robbing a grocery store.) God also has directions for the head of the house in his relationships with other members of the household. Read Ephesians 5:23, 25, and discuss what his relationship to his wife is to be like. How is this different from what we see around us in the world? Which attitude, God's or the world's, provides better relationship possibilities? Explain your answer.

Turning to the father's relationship with his children, we find a two-fold aspect. The first is found in Proverbs 22:6. This ties in with what we saw earlier in Deuteronomy 6. At the same time, Ephesians 6:4 is to be followed. What is the problem so many people find in this area? Why is it so difficult to balance these two points? There has to be balance between instruction and discipline. For discipline to work there must be some form of chastisement. The Word of God does not support abuse, nor does it agree with those who say any corporal punishment is abuse. In fact, God would call us abusers if we fail to properly instruct and discipline our children.

As these men become the elders of their communities, God has another word of advice for them. See Titus 2:2. What kind of lifestyle does this picture? What implications does this have for our lives before old age?

We now come to the second person in the family - the wife/mother. To know why she is needed in the family, re-read Genesis 2:20-22. Her place in the family is further described by God in Genesis 3:16. To better understand the idea of "rule", as used here, please read Genesis 4:7 where the same root is used. (The Hebrew root word in both these verses is "mashal"). Their interrelationship is again set forth in Ephesians 5:33. In what ways does this conflict with the world's view of such relationships? (Should you want to do further study later, read the book of Ruth - 4 chapters - and discuss the relationship between Boaz and Ruth, as they meet and learn about each other.)

Other characteristics of the wife/mother are given in Titus 2:3-5. What responsibilities are listed here? How are these to be fulfilled? Describe the kind of woman set forth here and how she fits into today's world. A further development on this theme is found in Proverbs 31:10-31. List the personal traits of this ideal woman. Why are we given such a description? Although it is unlikely anyone could do all this, it surely gives us a goal, toward which we might grow with the Lord's help.
Children

Children in the family are the members of the family we will be considering in this Bible study.

Read Psalm 127:3-5. How are children to be viewed in the family according to these verses? In what ways has our society rejected this teaching? God places value on all life - for He is its originator. When we value life also, we are following His path.

Children are to honour their parents. In Luke 2:51-52, we find an excellent example for all to follow. Why is this such a good object lesson? Note that Jesus Christ did not only fulfil God's will perfectly in our place, just for us as adults, but also for us as children. How can this be used to teach children a basic lesson about God's forgiving grace?

The same behaviour that the young Jesus followed is urged upon children repeatedly in Scripture. Read Ephesians 6:1-3 and Mark 7:10 for other points regarding this.

Exodus 20:12, 21:17, and Deuteronomy 5:16 are still other verses which should be considered. How important does God say it is for parents to be held in honour by their children?

Throughout the Bible, we find sons in the family learning the livelihood of their fathers. In Genesis 24 and following chapters, we have Isaac learning to care for Abraham's flocks; Jacob and Esau hunting and caring for the flocks of Isaac and Laban; and Joseph's ten brothers caring for their father's flocks. This training helps in learning to be sensible. Read Titus 2:6.

Jesus again was/is an example for us. As He grew up, He learned the trade of carpentry; see Mark 6:3. Paul, the apostle, likewise learned tent-making (ACTS 18:3).

For the daughters, the domestic arts need to be learned. Having such training, the women provided hand-spun threads, cloths and linens necessary for the Tabernacle and priests' garments in the wilderness - see Exodus 35:25-26.

You might also review Proverbs 31:10-28, for another example of how a woman's training and Godly personality is to show forth in her life. When must such training start to produce this kind of wife and mother?

Such training, though for both boys and girls, is not to keep them from running and playing. This is also important, as seen in Zechariah 8:5.

All this is to be balanced. How does the world bring imbalance into our lives? How can we avoid falling into the world's imbalance?

In preparing to conclude this study on God's purpose for the family, consider how your family is falling short of what God has for you. Confess your shortcomings and seek His power and aid in becoming more of the family He would have you to be.

Close with a devotional reading of Psalm 133, which describes the results of good familial relations.

by Rev. Steven T. Cook

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