Bible Study: The Value Scripture Places on Children

The society we live in can be very confusing. We have a lot of trouble pinning values down. A good example of this is the value of children. We have telethons for the children through which people try to raise millions of dollars for the benefit or the medical treatment of children. Then we have abortion and euthanasia in which we deliberately slaughter children. On the one hand children seem to be so precious our society would do anything for them. On the other hand we see our society condoning and even encouraging the destruction of children for reasons no more important than personal convenience. This study will examine the true value of children - the value God has assigned to them.

The first place we will look to discover the value God gives to children is in Genesis 1:28. This is the passage in which God commands, "be fruitful and multiply." What does this say about the value of children to God? Is the bearing of children in accord with the will of God? Does that suggest a value? How does Exodus 21:22 tell us that even the unborn child is of value?

In Job 1:18-22 it is clear that the loss of Job's children is a great tragedy. Even without this Scriptural example we would know that the loss of children is not a good thing. Compare Job's reaction to the loss of his children with common reactions you hear today. How are they the same? In what ways are they different? Does Job's more spiritually mature reaction lead us to a possible explanation about why there is not more general outrage today over abortion?

Now read Job 42:10-17. How does God express the fact that children are a blessing here? How does the text describe the length of time that the children were a blessing to Job? What additional dimension of that blessing of children is described in verse 17? How would we state those blessings today?

God's special concern for children is more clearly shown in Luke 18:15-17. Which comments by Jesus clearly show that He does not consider children to be simply "undeveloped adults"? God has also given other special words about children in Ephesians 6:4. Does this passage mean to say that if your children become angry with you for administering Godly discipline and instruction in the Lord, you should refrain from doing so? Is it love to avoid making children angry by allowing them to manipulate adults with anger or temper tantrums? How is this verse actually a warning and help in preventing that? Does it help to understand the verse by realising that children who enter their teen years without having had solid discipline and instruction (especially in the Lord) become angry at their parents, society and themselves. Note that the Lord is even concerned about this.

The marriage blessing in Psalm 128:3-6 also presents us with the fact that children are a blessing. How does verse 3 indicate that children are a blessing? What additional blessing is alluded to in verse 6? In what language has the world today attempted to make people with many children feel guilty? Is the world, in doing this, making sin of what God has said is a blessing? Since the world's view on this matter is the very opposite of God's, where does the world's view originate? Does the world's view, so clearly illustrated in this issue of having many children, offer an atmosphere which cheapens life? How has this ethos contributed to the abortion and infanticide problem?

What can be Done?

This background helps us to understand the actions of the early Christians who lived in Roman society where abortion and infanticide was practised by several methods. One of the most common forms of accomplishing an abortion was through the use of drugs which induced premature delivery (which is what the new "abortion pill" does today). The Greek word for this practice "pharmakeia" was thought to mean "to enchant with drugs" by the people of the Middle-ages. The use of drugs was not widely understood until centuries after the King James translation, which translates this word as "sorcerer" or "witchcraft", was completed. This means that passages such as Galatians 5:20 specifically condemn the practice of inducing abortions. Abortion stands out in the book of Revelation as one sin which is mentioned several times and receives special condemnation. Extra-biblical writings from the first and second centuries inform us that Christians were deeply involved in saving the lives of would-be victims of infanticide.

Roman law declared that a new-born was not a human-being under law until officially accepted by the father. New-borns which were not
accepted by the father were actually thrown, alive, into the city’s garbage dump. In some cities Christians would man around-the-clock watches and rescue all living infants placed in the dump when the would-be killers left. This refusal to accept the recognised code of death was one of the main reasons the Christians were so hated in the Roman Empire.

Clearly the early Christians persistently reflected the very same respect for children that their heavenly Father has. They found constructive ways to meet the problem where it happened by spending spare time in the garbage dumps and sacrificing their own means for the defenceless ones. In return they received the additional blessing of the Lord by being able to raise the unwanted children of Roman pagans as redeemed children of God.

How is our society similar to Rome’s in its policies toward the unborn, young children and the weak? Are you aware of any Christian groups engaged in positive activities which are similar to, or the same as, the activities of the early Christians? Do you have a responsibility before God to aid such efforts? What, specifically, can you do? What blessings might be expected from such involvement?

Keeping Luke 18:16 in mind, close this devotion with a prayer for the unborn and the new-born, as well as those who give of themselves to love the unborn and the new-born who are rejected by society today. Then read Luke 18:17 and sing “Jesus Loves Me”.

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