

LIFE MATTERS – What Matters Most - Family Part 2

Psalm 112:2, “His descendants will be mighty on earth, the generations of the upright will be blessed.” God wants you and your offspring to be mighty and blessed. There is no greater legacy you can pass on than to prepare your children for leadership and blessings than by helping them to fulfil their own family roles with excellence and joy.

Research shows that children from strong, stable families are more likely to be successful and happy in every way - physically, mentally, spiritually, economically, and socially – and that those with a strong extended family support system (like church) are better able to effectively cope with the challenges of life. Note, single parents and the unmarried population don't often describe themselves as being so happy and content with life as married couples.

As we look at today's disturbing family statistics, it's easy to get discouraged. Therefore, we should look to God to find the solutions. Consider the following: Over the past 30 years...

- * Teenage suicide has increased by almost 300%
- * Out-of-wedlock births have increased more than 400%
- * The divorce rate is up by more than 100%
- * The percentage of single parent families has increased 300%
- * Scholastic Aptitude Test scores among all students have dropped 73 points.

In addition, the number one health problem for women today is domestic violence. Four million women were beaten by their partners in the US last year. And more and more children have no functioning fathers. One in three children go to bed each night in a home where his or her father does not live. Where are the fathers? And it is not only a secular problem. In **1 Corinthians 4:16** the apostle Paul said, **“For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers.”**

But God has always had a plan for the family, and this extended family, and this plan is generational. The father is the priest in the home and his role is like that of the Good Shepherd. [Read **Psalm 23**] He protects, nurtures, provides for, and restores. He is the “saviour” of the family! The father shines the love of God onto every member of the family. He doesn't have to be right – but he must make right!

How do you see your role as a family member? Too often people do not see themselves as valuable and precious in a family environment – as having something significant to contribute. Men, many of you tend to see work as a place to contribute and home as a place to crash. You come home from work exhausted, and you somehow expect that everything should be in order. Everyone should be happy and you should be left to recuperate from the efforts of the day.

When you're faced with the impact of the realities that parenting is work, relationships take effort and maintaining cleanliness and order in the home is a significant task, it throws you off balance. It doesn't meet you subconscious, unexamined expectation that somehow the huge benefits of quality home and family life will simply be there for you with little or no real investment on your part.

And because that expectation is not met, you begin to blame and accuse and punish those around you in little ways. Someone once said, *“No one has learned the meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellow man.”*

The law of contribution must operate in every family. Every member must be consciously contributing to the welfare of the other members. Everyone must see both work and home as avenues of contribution; this empowers you to move beyond competition and compromise by making work and home complimentary. It empowers you to recognise that the issue is not *either/or*, but *and*. It's living and contributing in the unifying and encompassing whole of which work and home are both parts.

Aligning with the principle of contribution also opens your eyes to ways in which you can contribute that will make a real difference. Whether you are a husband, wife, parent, grandparent, son, daughter, niece, nephew, uncle, aunt, or cousin, there are things you can do to make your family better. And they are usually those little things, the things that are so difficult or taxing or costly.

Keep this in mind if you can, "*Quality family life is never an accident; it is always an achievement.*"

The *quality family* is always the direct result of proactive effort and conscious investment in the relationships that matter most. I strongly recommend that you capture your vision of the spouse/parent/family member you want to be – in some way that is helpful for you. I also suggest that you then be brutally honest with yourself concerning what kind of family member you *are*. And remember the need to be both real and realistic.

The only way to get where you want to be is to start where you are. So recognise the reality. Only then can you effectively chart a course that will get you from one place to another. And as you move along be sure to review your vision.

Much success in life comes as a result of this simple strategy. You raise your sights to a mark and keep moving toward it. Even if you never fully reach it, by simply moving toward it as effectively as you can, you will diminish the distance and make a tremendous difference in the quality of everything you do along the way.

The apostle Paul said this, "***One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus***" [Philippians 3:13-14].

Fulfilling your vision for the family may take some time and some real effort on your part to press ahead. And you are going to have to forget those things which are behind; the old baggage in the past. Remember, "*...one thing I do!*" Do one thing at a time; take one step at a time; and keep the vision before you.