

## **LIFE MATTERS** – What Matters Most – Family Part 3

Isaiah 40:11, “*He will lead His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.*” This paints a beautiful picture of Jesus – clearly revealing His great love and compassion for all believers. However, the main emphasis of this verse is on the way Jesus *leads*. He leads like a shepherd who’s primary concern is for the young – the innocent. Notice, the Good Shepherd gathers the lambs (the young children), and protects them by keeping them close to His heart, and in addition to this, He gently guides those with infants (the young mothers). Hence, we can safely assume that as a leader, Jesus is always very concerned about the young – the vulnerable.

In the context of the family every member is a *leader*. Whether you are a husband, wife, parent, grandparent, son, daughter, niece, nephew, uncle, aunt, or cousin, there are other family members that you can influence. Therefore, your leadership style, and role within the family, is vitally important. And as you consider your function within the family, I recommend that you continuously think in terms of “family leadership” – in terms of your unique opportunity to influence and nurture those close to you. When you’ve learned to apply the correct leadership principles, you can contribute to creating a strong, joyful family. There is no greater legacy you can pass on than to have helped, or even equipped, other family members to fulfil their own *family roles* with excellence. You can have a generational effect on your family – this is awesome!

While all family members have the opportunity to contribute in this way, I sincerely believe that the most important ingredient of a successful family is the leadership exercised by parents. Hence, *family leadership – and especially leadership exercised by parents – is one of the defining activities of the human experience*. Why? Because it powerfully shapes how the next generation sees family. And also, what they do and achieve in their current family and future families. But remember, this is not only important to you, it’s of great importance to God, as He thinks generational. The bible mentions “*children and their children’s children, to the third and fourth generation.*” Proverbs 17:6 says, “*Children’s children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father.*” In today’s society there are too many old men with no crowns (grand-children) and too many children without any glory (fathers).

Everything hinges on *leadership* in the family. And the primary emphasis concerning family leadership is on parenting. Parents have four basic roles:

1. To provide the basic necessities of life – physical, social, emotional and spiritual (*2 Corinthians 12:14*).
2. To protect family members from physical, social and economical harm (*Lamentations 2:19*).
3. To nurture family members in love, kindness and generosity (*Ephesians 6:4*).
4. To teach family members the principles and values that empower them to have rich, rewarding relationships and joyful, fulfilling lives (*Proverbs 22:6, Deut.6:7*).

In two-parent homes, while one parent may take the prime responsibility for fulfilling one role/function or another, truly effective parents will fully support each other in their roles as equal partners. Note, government and function are different.

There is a government structure in the home, ordained by God, as there is an ordained government in the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus, who in turn reveals the Father. The Father is “head” of the government in heaven. Likewise, within each family here on earth, the man is head of

the home. This is not male ego, it is a theocracy. The man has been appointed by God to take full responsibility for the whole family *in order to give an account*. This is his family function!

Therefore, the government structure in the home is totally reliant on responsibility and accountability, and not authority. The man's function as "head" of the home does not make him any more important in God's eyes. Each function/role within the family is of equal importance to God. Therefore there is equality in the family, but it is founded and grounded on each member's designated role/function. And if you are a single parent this does not exclude you in any way.

Single parents can proactively secure help from their close friends, extended family members, or the church community in fulfilling these essential roles/functions. If you are a single parent, you can be rest assured that God has already placed around you people who will support and assist you in your role as a parent. How can I be sure of this? Well, our opening scripture shows clearly that the Good Shepherd will protect and guide those with vulnerable children. God will always look for ways to take care of your child. But it's up to you to give Him full and unrestricted access to the child's life.

Whatever role/function you may have as a family member, you should remind yourself that you are not there merely to help, but also to be helped. We must all learn to both give and receive in a family environment. Otherwise you will feel used.

Now there are certain things that you can do to help yourself:

1. Create a family value system that you can rely on. By studying and acquiring knowledge of God's word you will help to build a value system that you can totally rely on. One that you know is pleasing to God! The infallible word of God is powerful, it is active and alive, it's sharper than any two-edged sword – penetrating to the dividing line of the soul and the spirit, and of the deepest parts of your nature – exposing and sifting and analysing the very thoughts and intents of your heart (*Hebrews 4:12*).
2. Create a family mission statement. One of the most effective family leadership activities is to create a sense of shared vision and values in the minds and hearts of all family members. And one of the best ways to do this is to create your own family mission statement. Having a clear family vision will propel you forward and cause many positive things to come to pass (*Habakkuk 2:2, 3*).

Having a family vision, and writing it down plainly, will serve to clarify the fundamental heart-set of your family. It will give you a sense of identity and purpose. And from that almost everything else in the family will flow.

When there is no shared vision, family members are more likely to go their own separate ways – operating out of their individual values and agendas. But with a shared vision – when the family is of one heart and one mind – the situation is reversed. Family members tend to see and understand the supreme importance of the family. Each individual sees how his or her role helps to fulfil that shared purpose. They feel valued! But keep in mind: *The way the family sees is at the root of what the family does and the results the family gets*.

OUR FAMILY MISSION

To love each other...

To help each other...

To believe in each other...

To wisely use our time, talents and resources to bless others...

To pray together...

To worship together...

Forever.