

The Bible on Family

part 14 of Serving Jesus Together

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American families have changed a lot over the last 50 years. And businesses have been created to meet the changing needs of families. In the 1970s many women were moving into the work force. This created new stress on the family. So much of what mom normally did was not getting done.

So Karen Donovan, aged 38, got the idea for a new business. She started her own company and named it Rent-A-Wife. Her slogan was, "Everybody needs a wife." To interested residents of San Francisco's Bay area, Rent-A-Wife provided two people who were ready to perform a long list of chores. They shopped for food, paid bills, gave parties, met guests at the airport, answered mail, typed letters, made travel arrangements, and much more. There were several things they did not do. They did not clean, unless it was following a party. They did not do babysitting. And Ms. Donovan always sent them in pairs to make clear that they did not include all that you might think of from the name of the company. Ms. Donovan's business grew rapidly and is still around today.

Now, this story has nothing to do with today's sermon except that it is about families and so is the sermon. We are continuing our series from 1 Timothy. Today, we are in chapter 5. The main subject of chapter five is the ministry to widows. The church in Ephesus had a ministry to widows. Our church has a Homeless Ministry, a Grief ministry, and a Benevolence ministry.

Many of the churches of the first century had a ministry to widows. Widows and orphans were the most vulnerable people in the community. There were no government social programs like welfare, Medicaid, or Social Security. Becoming a widow or an orphan were the most common ways that people became poor.

The first church had a daily distribution of food to the needy widows in the church. We read of this in Acts 6. The apostles were led by God to help meet the needs of the widows in that church. Let's turn now and see what God has for us in 1 Timothy 5.

1 Timothy 5:3 (NIV) Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.

Now he is going to differentiate between some Christian widows in the church and other Christian widows in the church. The difference was whether they had family members who were Christians.

1 Timothy 5:3-4, 8, 16 (NIV) Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God...

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever...

If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

Timothy was to instruct the Christians in Ephesus about their family responsibilities as followers of Jesus Christ. This was a financial obligation. It included providing food, clothing, shelter, and medical care for immediate and extended family members.

It is God's plan that we care for our families. Our families are our first mission field. We are all to be living on mission with Jesus, taking the gospel to the world. Your world starts at home. Home is where you can let your hair down and relax. But we must keep in mind that even when relaxing, we are on mission with Jesus. And those in our families need Jesus as much as anyone else does.

God has much to say in the Bible about families. We read there instructions written to husbands, wives, parents, and children. This morning I want to give you an overview of what the Bible says about families.

Marriage and family were invented by God. We see this near the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis.

Genesis 2:20-24 (NIV) So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Marriage and family were invented by God. **God created marriage and family for His own purposes.** God has a purpose for everything. I can't think of a good purpose for mosquitoes, but that does not mean there is none. God created them for a reason. God created marriage and family with a purpose in mind.

The family is to be a place of teaching and learning.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NIV) These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

While this command comes to the Jews under the old covenant with God, it shows God's intent for families in general. God's people are to be teaching their faith at home.

What are Christians to be teaching in our families?

I did not say parents, because the parents may not both be Christians. I did not say parent, because it may be that that neither parent is a Christian. In some families a child or teenager is the only Christian in that family. This teaching responsibility then rests on them, though to a different degree than for a parent.

1. Teach the reality of God.

There are many people in our world who do not believe in the Christian God. There are also many people who do not believe in any God. The consequences of a true, living God, should be evident if God is real. So we who believe in such a God must live in such a way that it reveals our belief in a God.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Your children must come to believe that Jesus is real to you. And you are the great parent you are becoming... because of your relationship to Jesus. This provides the motivation for your children to believe too.

2. Teach God's ways.

We teach the revealed will of God for His people to live out.

Ephesians 6:4 (NIV) Fathers, bring (your children) up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Your children are learning values every day. They watch TV and learn different values. They listen to friends and learn different values. They hear the teachers in school and learn different values. Parents, you need to be talking about these different values with your children and showing them what matches the values of God and what do not. Teach them not to believe something just because it is on TV, in the newspaper, or on the internet. Teach them to be discerning, based on God's values as revealed in the Bible.

3. Teach the Lordship of Jesus.

It is one thing to believe in God. It is another to submit your life to Him. Lots of people believe in God without submitting their lives to Him. But a person is a Christian only if he or she submits to Jesus as Lord.

The Lordship of Jesus is 24/7. The Christian faith is not just something extra that we do on the side, on Sunday, when we gather as a church. Christianity is a personal relationship of submission of one's life to Jesus Christ. That includes all of you life,... every day,... at church, home, work, play, school,... in every activity. For Jesus to be Lord, He must be Lord of your whole life, not just a few hours on Sunday.

It is not enough to exhibit a faith in the reality of Jesus. We must live in submission to Jesus. Our children must see this, hear this from us. When your children notice differences in values between you and your unsaved relatives and friends, and ask about the difference, you explain that it is because Jesus is Lord.

A Christian home is one where at least one person in the family is a Christian. God's plan is for the unbelievers in a family to learn the Christian faith from the parent or child who is a follower of Jesus Christ. God's plan is that the other family members see a faith in Jesus as Lord lived out before them.

4. Teach respect and obedience to authority.

Not every authority deserves respect because of their actions. But every authority deserves respect because God commands it.

Exodus 20:12 (NIV) "Honor your father and your mother..."

It is in the home that most children first learn to have respect for authority. The first authority figure over them is the parent. In time they learn to have respect for other adults, grandparents, babysitters, day care teachers, school teachers, and on to police, judges, and bosses. The ultimate authority over us is Jesus. Probably all children at some point think that adults can do whatever they want. Christian parents must teach, in the home, that they live under the authority of Jesus.

5. Teach how to love.

Ephesians 5:25 (NIV) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Ephesians 6:4 (NIV) Fathers, do not exasperate your children;

Believers learn how to love as Christians in the gathered church. But we must live that love in our homes. We must treat each other as Jesus would. We teach this love in marriage, between parents and children, among extended family.

God wants us to have the best marriages and the best families. That only happens when we love with the love of God.

I read an old story about learning to live out this love. There were an older man and woman, brother and sister, who had lived together for many years. They had not gotten along with each other for a long time, years. This was known by everyone in town. Then a change occurred. Their friends started noticing that they treated each other better, at least publicly. One friend finally asked for an explanation. Mr. Brown replied, "Well, about a year ago we decided to keep two bears in the house at all times."

The startled friend simply replied, "Bears?!?"

"Yeah," Mr. Brown continued. One of these bears is 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' and the other is 'Forbear one another in love.' And since we took these two bears into our home we have found the going a lot easier."

God calls us to a specific kind of living in Jesus Christ. To become a Christian is to submit our lives to Him, to live in obedience to Him. He invites you to this life today.

He died for you and will forgive your sins based on His death and resurrection. Receive Him today as your Savior and turn your life over to Him as your Lord.