

Marriage • Parenting • Spiritual Growth • Sexuality • Relationships • Mental Health
Men • Women • Hurts and Emotions • Singles • Ministers and Mentors • Technology



The Importance of Family
by Elder Bro. Lynn Fiechter



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

Counseling and Family Services

Helping the hurting. Nurturing hope. Encouraging growth.

Phone: (309) 263-5536 | www.accounseling.org

The Importance of Family

We can't overestimate the importance of family. It's such a large part of God and who He is. He allows us to call Him Abba Father and helps us understand the concept of adoption. We can be adopted as His sons and daughters; children of the King. This is a task much bigger than we are. *Ephesians 3:20* says:

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

The two concepts of family and church overlap. It is important to keep in mind the concept of family is a good example of how a church should be structured. A helpful thought to frame this topic is, "What happens to you, matters to me."

Stages of Families

Singleness: *1 Corinthians 7* lays out good instruction for different stages of life, including the concept of singleness. Those who are single should be encouraged to serve the Lord without distraction, or as *1 Corinthians 7:35b* puts it, "*attend upon the Lord without distraction.*" Singles are not in a holding pattern, but rather in a unique position to serve Christ without certain distraction. The Apostle Paul said he preferred singleness. If you are single, do not stay in this position holding your breath and waiting for the next thing to happen. Instead, be excited about the plan God has for you and do it diligently.

Marriage Vows: When we take marriage vows, we do not just commit to stand together. We commit to make a life together. The Bible lays out the concept of two becoming one. This is not always easy to understand, and it is not something that happens quickly. It can only happen when God is at the center of the relationship. If we marry someone who loves God more than they love us, then we have a foundation to build upon. For single people, if God may be leading you towards marriage, make it your prayer that you will marry someone who loves God more than he or she loves you. Scripture illustrates this principle of working together:

"Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband."(1 Corinthians 7:3)

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."(Ephesians 5:20-21)

Family with Children: When God blesses a family with children, whether it's one or a dozen, whether they are biological, foster children, or adopted, life will change! If children become a part of your life, hang on tight because life is going to get busy.

For children to please God, *Colossians 3:20* simply says they need to obey their parents. This means obeying parents who are imperfect every day. Although this is not really complicated, it is also not really easy to get accomplished. Hopefully our love for the Lord and our desire to follow Him as His children will help our children find it easier to follow and obey us as parents.

The Importance of Family

Areas of Caution

Whenever families and parents make mistakes, God's loving hand can come in and get our attention to better serve Him. Within the areas of caution, there are three D's the devil delights in: (a) division, (b) dysfunction, and (c) dissatisfaction.

Division: In the United States of America, 48% of first time marriages do not last, thus making remarriage common. 79% of women and 89% of men will remarry once or twice within five years of a divorce. Of all marriages that occur in America, 43% of them are second or third marriages. And of those remarriages, over 70% of them involving children will not last more than five and a half years. This shows our enemy, Satan, is doing a good job of dividing us. Although within our church there is not as high of divorce and remarriage rate, it is important to think about neighbors down the road or the friends of our children. We can almost count that every other one comes from a background of divorce or remarriage. This shows the best gift we can give our child is to love our spouse.

Dysfunction: Obviously the close proximity of a family offers some challenges. Within our church, we are a tightknit group of people scattered around this nation. We get together often as church families. However, we should not let this close proximity create challenges, but rather use it as an asset.

Warning signs of dysfunction include when criticism becomes more common than offering credit, or the joy that God wants to share with us is replaced with judgment or jealousy. Another caution in regards to dysfunction involves friendship parenting, or being a friend to one's child. Families do not work if they are lacking discipline and structure.

Dissatisfaction: If we do not battle unrealistic expectations, we end up battling each other. On the other extreme, we can be overly optimistic and think today or next Tuesday our problems are going to be over. While that is not quite the right mindset for God to use us and teach us, we also need to be careful we are not discontent with things in life that come into our family. For example, are we dissatisfied with our church or how things go at our in-laws? Within the area of dissatisfaction, we need to use wisdom to protect our children from some of the negative things we experience until God helps us deal with them.

Areas of Encouragement

Scripture gives clear direction for roles of a family in *Colossians 3:18-21*:

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

But how do we fulfill these job descriptions? Earlier verses in this chapter give us guidance:

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."(Colossians 12-14)

The Importance of Family

These scriptures never fail, and we can count on them in every instance to guide us. Instead, it is our application of these scriptures that can fail. Within any relationship, there are three principles that will apply to anyone. The ABCs of family and relationships are (a) accountability, (b) brokenness, and (c) confession.

Accountable: *Ephesians 5* talks about submitting yourself one to another in the fear of God. Husbands must have a desire to lead, protect, and sacrifice. Feelings of inadequacy are not as concerning as being over-confident in one's leadership ability. If confidence is not anchored in humility through Christ, then a husband could be in front, blazing a trail and leaving his wife in the shadow with the children trying to figure out what is going on. It may look good on the surface, but it may not have the desired end result. God has equipped husbands to hazard their lives, to lay them on the line, for those He has placed under their protection. Because God has equipped husbands to do that, they need to be confident in His grace to do so.

While wives have tender hearts, husbands have tender egos. When a husband starts to feel his wife does not believe in him or is disappointed in him or that she has lost a measure of respect for him, even if it may be deserved at times, the husband will start to crumble on the inside. Without the support of a wife, a husband will not be the man God has called him to be.

In the area of children and accountability, it is important to remember it is the parents' job to be the example. Parents trust there will be enough love and respect to make things work. However, children age, and your relationship with them will change and shift. Within this changing relationship, parents may not always know the best thing to do, but Jesus has called us to humble ourselves as a little child. *Matthew 19* talks about when Jesus was in the temple and people were disappointed others had come in who should not have been there, including children. Jesus told them not to be concerned and let the children remain, and that they themselves should become like the children. There is a concept of child-likeness we have to maintain, even as leaders. We do not lose respect by being child-like in the area of forgiveness and trust. Just as children reach up and hold their parent's hand, because they trust them and think their daddy or their mommy is so neat, we should also be encouraged to have this kind of child-likeness.

Brokenness: We have to recognize how much of a need we have. When it comes to decision-making, we will not always know what to do, and we need to go to the Lord. He knows what we should do, and He not only wants to change our life, but He wants to change our day. Being broken helps us to understand that.

When we make decisions, we should ask, "Am I making a decision that is faith-based or fear-driven?" Sometimes when it is by fear, the concern can keep getting worse and one tries to do all they can to protect the family. This can seem really honorable. While we can never try too hard to be a parent, we need to understand that we are not the Savior. Instead we point them to their need for a savior and then we keep pointing them to their Savior. On the other hand, we could be fearful our children are going to be left behind and they are not going to be involved enough or they are going to be odd. With this fear we could embrace everything that is available and get fragmented as a family. It should rather be our goal in the area of brokenness that our family blesses the brotherhood and the brotherhood blesses our family.

To maintain brokenness, we need to teach our children to discern by adding value, rather than taking value away from something. We do not need to use our neighbor's choice of church as a bad example when we can add value to where we think God has called us to be. Nor do we need to use someone's different philosophy of parenting as a bad example when we can try to help them understand why we believe God is honored in a different way.

The Importance of Family

Confession: We should think of this as confessing. *James 5:16* says “*Confess your faults one to another.*” Confession keeps us where we need to be and helps us understand others. It is critical in order to maintain a humble perspective on life and in our relationships with others.

Conclusion

Family can be described as a place where we find love and support when we do not deserve it. If this is true at home, it should also be so at church. If it is true at church, it should also be done at home. This means giving forgiveness when ugliness is shown, giving praise and honor and respect, being able to voice opinions without fear of ridicule, and building confidence in who we are because we are accepted. This models how the body of Christ should work. There has to be some give and take, because we are not a perfect fit. However, our enjoyment in each other and our laughter needs to be evident. We need to have the ability to band together and lift each other up when attacks come. If we can band together as families and church families, we will help our families see value and appreciation for limits, sacrifices, and opportunities to serve.

In summary, we need to speak kindly, care deeply, live simply, do our best, and let God handle the rest. God has given us so much to work with. This is what will be attractive to a world that needs something to believe in.