

23. Marriage and the Family

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian, a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honour, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message.

God established marriage, and Jesus gave His blessing to it. The relationship between a man and wife typifies Christ's love for His church. Marriage is not intended to be broken by divorce.

- God established marriage in Eden. Genesis 2:18-25
- Jesus gave His blessing to marriage and reaffirmed it as a lifelong commitment. John 2:1-11; Matthew 19:3-9
- Divorce and remarriage is permissible only in cases of marital unfaithfulness. Matthew 5:31-32
- In planning marriage, we should plan to marry one who shares our religious convictions. 2 Corinthians 6:14

Texts for further study: Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, 39

God is concerned with family relationships. Commitment to Christ forms a strong centre which draws families together. Parents are responsible to train their children to love and obey God.

- In the last days God sends a message that strengthens families. Malachi 4:5-6
- Centred on Christ, families draw together. Ephesians 5:21-33
- Cooperation and consideration are essential. Colossians 3:18-21
- Parents are responsible to discipline their children and to train them to love and obey God. Proverbs 22:6, 15; Ephesians 6:1-4

Texts for further study: Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Hebrews 12:7-9

Personal Application

-  God placed me in a family to increase my joy in life through fellowship. Even if I do not have a close family unit, I can rejoice in being part of the family of God.
-  What part does family worship have in keeping the family centred on Christ?
-  What is the relationship between learning to obey one's parents and learning

Commitment

- Father, I believe and accept the principles of family as established by You. I thank You for them and want to live according to Your plan.