

What's Next? A Look at the Christian Home

Scripture: Ephesians 5:18

Code: B100808

Today marks the launch of a brand new series on the *Grace To You* blog on the family. One of the reasons we extended the creation series over several months was due to the intensity of opposition to the biblical view of origins, not just by the world, but by members of the professing church. The Bible's teaching on the family, closely related to the doctrine of creation, has likewise been attacked and subverted from the very beginning, since Genesis 3.

The last few decades have been particularly brutal on families. In fact, our generation is watching the redefinition of marriage and the family to align the most intimate relationships with personal preferences and lifestyle choices. Immorality, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, abortion, sterilization, women's liberation, delinquency, and sexual rebellion are like strands in a cord that is strangling the family.

There are many opinions about the restructuring of the family. Some sociologists say marriages need to change. They say we need "open marriages," "gay marriages," or even "non-marriages." Many seem to think it really doesn't matter whether marriages continue as they have in the past. People are groping, without any base of authority, to try to find out how to make meaningful relationships in a disintegrating society.

It's time for Christians to reiterate the divine pattern. Christian marriages and families should demonstrate a way of living that is rewarding, meaningful, and fulfilling—something completely counter-cultural. People need to see the divine pattern for relationships, modeled before the world by Christian marriages and families.

If we don't preserve the family, society will crumble. The family is the basic building block of society. When it goes, everything goes. The ability to pass on meaningful advice to the next generation is lost when there is no communication and discipline. Without a sense of legacy, reinforced by stable families, the culture is dominated by the loudest, most brazen, and most vocal of its sinners.

Here's the key to understanding the divine pattern for marriage and family: you must be born again. If you're not a Christian, you have no power to make your marriage and family what God intends it to be. It's not that nonbelievers can't have meaningful relationships. They can—but only up to a point. They'll never understand the true meaning of marriage; they'll never know total fulfillment in the family.

Just as an individual can find fulfillment only in a relationship with God, so also a family can find fulfillment only when they pursue relationships defined, designed, and authored by God Himself. It's God who created man, invented marriage and the family, and wrote the book on how marriage is to function. So, apart from knowing Jesus Christ, who brings you into a relationship with God, you can't expect your family to be fulfilled.

But there's more to having a meaningful, fulfilled marriage and family than just being a believer. There are many Christians who know and love the Lord, and yet they fail to live according to His moral, marital, or familial laws. Why? Because they are not filled with the Spirit.

It's one thing to possess the Spirit of God; it's quite another to be under His control. Ephesians 5:18 says, "Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." In other words, every Christian possesses the Spirit but is not always filled with, or controlled by, the Spirit. And when we're not controlled by the Spirit of God, our family life will manifest that. You will always experience disharmony and discord in your relationships, especially at home, whenever you are out of step with the Spirit, walking in disobedience. Becoming a Christian is the indispensable first step; being controlled by the Spirit results in practical transformation.

Does it seem to you that we're drowning in a sea of information on marriage and the family? Seminars, conferences, weekend retreats, books, and counselors all promise to revitalize our most intimate relationships. Whenever problems arise, people seem to run first to a professional counselor, psychiatrist, or analyst, buy a supply of books, attend a seminar, or take in more information (e.g., audios, videos).

But where are the results? Marriage and family materials have littered the shelves of the Christian bookstores for years. Can those resources adequately address the profound spiritual problems within marriages? Are they *sufficient*? Ultimately, the answer would have to be *No*.

This may sound like an oversimplification, but it needs to be said: If you're not filled with the Spirit, you can attend all the seminars, read all the books, and spend thousands on counseling—none of it will matter. On the other hand, if you're filled with the Spirit, *He'll* control you and transform your relationships. Make no mistake—counseling, books, and seminars *can* be helpful for understanding what a Spirit-filled life looks like in your relationships. But you must understand: the key to the Christian life is to be filled with, controlled by, the Holy Spirit. Only through His power can our families be what God wants them to be.

So, our goal for the next several weeks will be to explore what God's Word says about the family in general, and each relationship within the family in particular.

Ready? Here we go . . .

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