

Family Pillars: The Foundation and Cornerstone of Christian Homes

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STUDY GUIDE

Disclaimer!!

If you are experiencing physical or emotional abuse, or in a severely dysfunctional relationship, SEEK professional help, find a safe space, tell a trusted friend, talk to your pastor, or report it to the authorities!

Key Text – Joshua 24:15

“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Framework

- Genesis 1:27—

“So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

“The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart.” (*Adventist Home*, 32)

Why Family? Why Now?

- Family is a crucial aspect of “End Time” message of God’s Church (Malachi 4:5-6; Luke 1:17)
- Family is one of the greatest avenues for manifesting God to the world, e.g., Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3)
- Family has the power to shape our destiny (e.g., Noah and Achan)
- Family is under attack by the Enemy of our Souls (Revelation 12:17)

Defining Family

- Hebrew term: *mišpāchāh*— “Clan,” “Tribe,” “Kinship group,” “Family group”

- Each *mišpāchāh* included one or more households, called *bêt 'āb*, “father’s house,” or *bêt 'ēm*, “mother’s house” (Genesis 24:28; Ruth 1:8; Song of Songs 3:4; 8:2).
- Households typically included people related by blood as well as people who were not kin (e.g., “sojourners,” and “servants”)
- Nuclear Family
- Extended Family
- Single/One Parent Family
- Blended Family

Families in Crises

- The Highest divorce rates were found in the Bible-belt (Barna Research Group)
- Atheist and Agnostics were found to have the lowest divorce rates.

(Barna Research Group)

- These findings challenge the view that “the family that prays together, stays together”

Family Challenges

1. Unhappy or dysfunctional families
2. Abuse and breakdown in communication
3. *Unhealthy boundaries and unhealthy control—no room for dissenting views and emotions*
4. *Religious or spiritual abuse under the guise of righteous indignation or discipline*

As Result, many...

- *Suffer in silence, trying their best to keep up appearances*
- *Feel helpless and hopeless*
- *Give up, resigning to fate and, ultimately, fatality*
- *Blame God, or themselves, or others*

Signals of Family Crises (American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy)

- Persistent feelings of dissatisfaction

- Problems with a child's behavior, school adjustment, or performance
- Sexual problems or concerns
- Unexplainable fatigue or difficulty sleeping
- Difficulties in talking with family members, friends, or co-workers
- Feelings of loneliness, moodiness, depression, sadness, failure, stress, or anxiety
- The need for tranquilizers, energizers, or sleeping aids
- Family stress due to chronic illnesses, or illness in which stress plays a major role
- Problems with alcohol or drugs
- Frequent financial difficulties
- Difficulty in setting or reaching goals
- Drastic weight fluctuations or irregular eating patterns
- Work difficulties, frequent job changes, problems with co-workers
- Difficulties with anger, hostility, or violence

Typical Sources of Family Crises (American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy)

- When the *unexpected* occurs (“life happens”)
- Changes in circumstances, *life events* (marriage, retirement, new job, children go off to college, etc.), and *choices*
- Resistance to *adaptation* to unexpected situations and life events (not flexible, no positive growth)
- Lack *cohesiveness* and *closeness* among members; no time for fellowship.
- Lack positive *conflict-management* skills.
- Fight over "*who is right*," rather than "*what is right*."
- Lack *time* and positive *interaction* with each other

Families in Crises Typically.... (American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy)

- Lack family *activities* and *quality time* together.
- Experience *stressed-out* symptoms — including sleeplessness, lack of appetite, disorientation, memory lapses, depression and anxiety.

- *Disagree* about family goals and how to reach them.
- Are *critical* and *hostile*, and *blame* each other.
- Lack open and safe *communication*. When families do not communicate well, they have more misunderstandings.
- Lack shared *values, rules* and *roles*. In poorly functioning families, members are *rigid* and will only do what they think they "should" do.

Reflection # 1

- Is your family presently crisis?
- Do you know a family that is in crisis?
- *If your family is not in crisis, thank God for His blessings and ask Him to keep your family in His arms*
- *If your family is in crisis, take a moment and give your family over to God*
- *If you know a family in crisis, take a moment to lift that family up in your prayer*

Family Pillars

- Proverbs 9:1—“Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her *seven pillars*”
(Foundation)
- Psalm 127:1— “*Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it...*”
(Builder)
- God must be the foundation and builder our lives/homes

Reflections # 2

- Is God the foundation of your life/home?
- Is God the builder of your life/home?
- *If not, ask Him right now to undo the faulty foundations of your life/home, and lay a new foundation.*

Joshua 24:15

Context of Text

- Joshua is now an aged leader
- Joshua now gives his farewell speech
- Joshua summoned all of the people and the key leaders to Shechem for a covenant renewal ceremony

God's Message for Families through Joshua

- Family idols and histories of dysfunction do not have to permanently define your family identity
- God meets families where they are and leads them to His perfect purpose for them (Joshua 24:1-13)
- For God to be foundation and builder our homes, we must break with all ancestral deities (v. 14); figuratively, the things in our family histories that eclipsed the worship of God
- God is not intimidated or deterred by our ancestral deities or baggage (v. 14)
- When families worship gods that God has defeated, families themselves are defeated (v. 15)
- Idolatry is at the heart of family crises
- The commitment to wholeheartedly serve God is the cornerstone of the family
- “But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (v. 15)
- The space that your idols occupy cannot contain God
- God wants to fill your entire home and the hearts of every occupant in your home with His healing presence

Reflections # 3

- What idols have contributed to your family's dysfunctions?
- *Ask the Lord the break down the idols in your life/home*

Remember

- Serving God defines our roles and relationships
- Serving God is our identity
- Serving God is our goal and passion
- Complete surrender to Christ
- God – Foundation, Builder, Pillars, Home
- Christ desires to fill every room, heart, conversation, action, and decision in our homes

Reflection # 4

- Is serving God the pillar of your life/home?
- Does Christ fill your home and your heart
- *Ask the Jesus Christ to give your life/home a radical make over*
- *Invite Christ to live out His life within you and manifest His likeness in your life/home*