

*Families in the Family of God*  
**God's Word on Family Living**

Lesson #2 for January 14, 2006

Scriptures: Exodus 20:12; Psalms 18:2; Song of Solomon; Isaiah 54:5; 62:5; John 10:11; 15:5; Ephesians 5:21-25

1. Families are such an integral part of our lives that it is difficult even to think of human life apart from them. Many illustrations are taken from family life to illustrate biblical principles. On the other hand the Bible has a lot to say about family relationships.
2. **Since God is love and the core value of the Christian family should be love and respect in relationships is it surprising that our views of God are so much molded by our family culture and our family culture is so affected by our views of God? What was God's original intention and purpose for creating the family structure?**
3. Three of the 10 Commandments, at least, deal with family relationships. Does this give us an idea of the importance of the family in God's plan? Why is it essential that we observe the fifth Commandment, the seventh Commandment and the 10th Commandment in order to have a truly Christian home and Christian relationships? **What do these commandments say to us about the closeness and sacredness of family bonds?**
4. As originally given almost every one of the 10 Commandments had a death penalty connected to it! (Exodus 21:15; Leviticus 20:9; Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Leviticus 20:10-12,14; Deuteronomy 22:22,23-25; Leviticus 20:14) How do you feel about this approach to encouraging obedience in our day? Why was it acceptable in their day? Why don't we ever talk about this in our day? Would it strengthen the family ties?
5. **In what other setting is there such intimate and potentially loving relationships as in the marriage relationship and the relationship between parents and children?** Many people have suggested that the family is the core of our society. What happens to society if that core breaks down? In our society today we have a pluralistic understanding of families. Single-parent families, homosexual families, blended families and couples who choose not to have children. What do these variations on the family theme say to us about ourselves at this time in human history?
6. What is the closest and most sacred bond known to men and women? Is it the bond between a husband and wife in a truly Christian marriage? Is it the bond between a parent and a child? Or could it be the bond between siblings? How do we explain the wise man saying there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother? (Proverbs 18:24) Apart from the commands not to disrespect our parents or to commit adultery or to covet our neighbor's spouse there are many other suggestions even commands in Scripture about family relationships.
7. How important is it that we teach our children the truth about God? Deuteronomy 6:6-8; Romans 1:18-25. Is it possible that one of the most important things that God made was the family?
8. How seriously should we take a command from Solomon stating "be happy with your wife"? (Proverbs 5:18,19) Was he?
9. The apostle Paul who was never married during his Christian ministry commands husbands on several occasions to love their wives. (Ephesians 5:21-25, 33) He wasn't struggling with this challenge at this time in his life. Was it easier for him to make this suggestion since he didn't have a wife?
10. We have no record that Paul ever had children. Yet he makes some very striking comments about how parents should treat children. Is that because as marriage and family counselors often say: those who give the most forthright comments about child rearing are those who've never had children? Are they the ones who are the greatest authorities? Or is it that those who

have children realize that nobody is a real authority?

11. The Bible is full of a number of other general relational directives that might have some implications for the family: love your enemies (Matthew 5:44) do unto others what you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12) love one another (John 13:34) do these commands apply with equal force within the family?
12. **What would happen if everyone within the Christian church or even within the Adventist Church practiced Christian principles within their families?**
13. Consider these statements from Ellen White: **“One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached.** Such a family gives evidence that the parents have been successful in following God's directions, and that their children will serve Him in the church. Their influence grows; for as they impart, they receive to impart again. The father and mother find helpers in their children, who give to others the instruction received in the home. The neighborhood in which they live is helped, for in it they have become enriched for time and for eternity. The whole family is engaged in the service of the Master; and by their godly example, others are inspired to be faithful and true to God in dealing with His flock, His beautiful flock.”--Review and Herald, June 6, 1899, par. 14. {1SAT 325.3; ML 124.4; AH 32.1; YRP 247.3; compare 6BC 1118.11}  
**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.**--RH, November 7, 1878, par. 12; Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 304. {ChS 208.3; AH 32.2; FLB 254.8}  
**The best test of the Christianity of a home is the type of character begotten by its influence. Actions speak louder than the most positive profession of godliness.** – *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 578, 579; CE 219.2; AH 32.3; compare ST, April 6, 1888 par. 5}
14. One of the Bible stories that we are encouraged to focus on in this lesson is the story of Ruth. The story of Ruth is a very fascinating one for a number of reasons: in some of the oldest documents it is actually a part of the book of Judges. It clearly occurred during the days of the judges. But while the children of Israel seemed to be acting despicably, this foreigner was acting like a true Christian! **Here was a Jewish family from Bethlehem who did almost everything wrong and ended up being the ancestors of Jesus Christ! What are we supposed to learn from such a case?**
  - a. When things got rough Elimelech's family instead of staying in their own territory went to a foreign nation.
  - b. When the famine was over in Bethlehem instead of coming home they remained in Moab!
  - c. The two sons after living for years in this foreign environment married Moabite wives. Hadn't they been warned? (See Deuteronomy 23:3: “No Ammonite or Moabite—or any of their descendants, even in the tenth generation—may be included among the LORD's people.” (GNB)
  - d. Why didn't either of these couples have any children for years?
  - e. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah such marriages were broken up! Or were they?
  - f. All the men in the family died!
  - g. Naomi apparently felt that despite losing her husband and her sons she still had some claim on the family property back in Bethlehem. So after a number of years she decided to return. (Why hadn't they done so sooner?) Jewish property was supposed to be returned to its appropriate owner every seven years even if it was sold by him in the meantime. Elimelech and Naomi had been gone probably in excess of two such redemption periods! No doubt someone in their family had claimed their property. What right did Naomi have

- to come home and claim it back?
- h. And when she did return home she brought with her the young widow, her daughter-in-law and Moabitess, Ruth.
- i. After being shown favor by Boaz, Ruth in a culturally-appropriate way suggested marriage!
- j. Based on comments made by both Boaz and Naomi he was one of the best men in the area. And most considerate.
- k. Later we discover that he was the son of Rahab the harlot from Jericho!
- l. After Ruth and Boaz were officially married their firstborn son was considered legally to be the child of Ruth's first husband. This was in accordance with the laws of levirate marriage.
- m. So why isn't Mahlon in the line of Christ in Matthew 1?!

What are we supposed to learn about families from all this? Why did Naomi and Elimelech leave all their family members and go to a foreign country when things got bad? Should we follow their example? Should our young women today follow Ruth's example in choosing a life partner? If Boaz was such an outstanding prospect for a husband—which seemed to be the case—why wasn't every eligible woman in the area trying to marry him? Were they perhaps shunning him because he was the son of a Jericho harlot? Was Rahab by any chance still alive during any part of this story?

15. A number of our guidelines for marriage are taken from the book of Proverbs. Once again, considering who wrote most of these Proverbs should he be considered a reliable adviser?
16. Do you think marriage in the Garden of Eden was quite different than marriage in our setting? How far have we come from God's original plan?
17. Another book written by Solomon, presumably in his younger years, is also regarded as a biblical model for marriage. Have you ever been helped in your marriage by the *Song of Solomon*? Is it obvious from a poem that is so culturally-determined what principles are intended that might still apply to marriages today? Why do you think this love poem was included in Scripture?
18. **In a number of places in Scripture God is compared to a good husband. In some passages this husband does some extraordinary things! What should we learned about God from Ezekiel 16 and 23?**
19. It has been said for years that "families that pray together, stay together." What are the most important characteristics of a family that "stays together"?
  - a. Family worships
  - b. Bedtime routines
  - c. Eating together
  - d. Annual vacations together
  - e. Spending Holidays together
  - f. Sabbath observance together
  - g. Serving together

Why do these things make a difference? Children need predictability, connection to adults who are meaningful in their lives, the identity that comes with such association, and the values that are thus created.

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