

When Families Fall Apart

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Listening to Christians sharing their views on why so many families around the world are falling apart, you might surmise that the biggest culprit is the influence of the immensely secularised Western culture we live in. But is it not more probable that the real reason for this disintegration is because 'Christian' families are increasingly not the kinds of godly households that God intended them to be?

Parents Teach Their Children

God intended the family to be the most basic unit of society. In Ephesians chapter 6 we read, *'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.'*

This passage, and many others like it, demonstrates that family is where activities such as visiting, eating, instruction, work, and play have their centre. He ordained the home to be the primary place of social interaction, and then laid down guidelines for proper interaction.

God calls us as Christian parents to be good teachers and children to be good learners. Society has taught us that kids should move away from the home as the learning centre, and that 'the experts' should teach them about their sexual, social and spiritual identity. The problem with this is that the 'expertise' of man has moved away from the fear of the Lord. Because of this, families get robbed of their God-purpose and God-calling.

Fathers play a vital part in family, because a father gives identity to his children

Fathers play a vital part in family, because a father gives identity to his children in a way which mirrors Jesus and His children. A father's voice gives direction to children. Children need to hear from their fathers that they are precious, worthy, highly esteemed and bought by Jesus!

Families Serve God Together

The enemy's ultimate goal is to attack families so that we turn against God and the principles of the Word of God. When families fall apart, churches fall apart. When churches fall apart, communities fall apart, and when communities fall apart, the world falls apart.

In today's society, everyone is extremely busy. We often forget to slow down. We need to re-assess how families function. A family is called to serve God together. In a family, we learn to serve each other. It is a place where we give and receive and where we care for each other. This is the first training ground of how a church family should function.

It is in family that we learn true godliness.

A godly family is one which has a lifestyle of worship. As we worship together, both in church and in small group settings, we provide security, stability and wisdom for life. Families should not only worship but play together and have fun! Fun breeds creativity and teaches us healthy social interaction.

It is in family that we learn true godliness. As parents, we demonstrate through our lifestyles and through instruction that we will "serve no other gods" than Christ, and we follow God obediently so that our families will be blessed to the thousandth generation. We teach our children not to commit murder with their words, we teach them not to steal – not someone else's testimony, their belongings or their identity. We teach our children to serve others, without expecting anything back.

Be Thankful for Everything

Unfortunately, we live in a day and age where our kids grow up with a sense of entitlement. It is our responsibility to teach them at home what a lifestyle of thankfulness and contentment looks like – to eat what they are served, to thank God for the gifts they receive. This is completely contrary to what we see in children that are not trained in God's ways, where it is not uncommon for a child to demand what they want rather than to say 'thank you' for what they are given. Even in other people's homes!

Restrict Social Media

We must not out-source our responsibility to teach our children how to behave on social media. This would include the right use of cell phones and iPad's in promoting a healthy lifestyle. These technologies should not be the beginning and end of every day, people are more important! In the manner in which we meaningfully interact and serve and connect as a godly family, we model something beautiful to the broken and disjointed communities around us.

Live by Faith

In Romans 12:2 we read, *'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.'* As parents, we will need to practice a lot of this kind of 'testing' and 'discerning' in order to make sure that our families properly reflect the God to Whom we have submitted ourselves. As we find the will of God for our families, may we bring hope to all the broken families around us instead of bemoaning the destructive influence of the increasingly godless society we find ourselves in. As

parents, may we reclaim our God-given responsibilities to be the primary shapers and influencers in our children's lives. By the power of Christ, we have this opportunity to be families that live out lives of faith; families that are held together by the bonds of Christ's love. May God bless our families with this kind of grace, so that we may be a source of blessing to the church and to the world we live in.