

Chapter 1: The Family

Your family is the most important in the whole, wide world!

Families come in all shapes and sizes; different colors and ethnicities, most functional and some not so much.

There are two things we can say about all families:

1. The family is the basic unit of human existence, the building block and cornerstone of society. In every society that I am aware of, from the Garden of Eden through the present day; in monarchies, dictatorships, democracies, regardless of the make-up of the government, the Family has been the Core Organization. For most of our existence on the planet, the family's primary objective has been survival and propagation - in many undeveloped countries this is still the case.
2. Your family is the most important in the whole, wide world!

Let's talk about the family.

Family is a Holy, Sacred institution. Initiated by God to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth," and prepare the next generation to take their place in and make a contribution to society.

I read the previous sentence and I am struck by the huge gap between what family is meant to be and the reality of family life as we know it. Certainly the sentence is Truth: the first half is right out of the Bible (Genesis 9:1) and why would God command us to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, if He did not also expect us to prepare the next generation?

As people are wont to do, my mind has immediately gone to my own experiences as a father: I was concerned about my children's future and took efforts to make sure they went to good schools and participate in activities designed to improve their minds and/or bodies. But preparing them to take their place in and to make a contribution to society? I cannot honestly say that my children becoming the next generation our society was depending upon to carry us to the next level, ever crossed my mind. What I do remember is what seemed like a day-to-day struggle to keep all the balls in the air.

I did have a goal for my children, which I formulated about the time they were starting school: I wanted my children to grow up to be independent people - independent thinkers, so I tried, to the extent possible (making allowances for safety issues), to allow my children to make their own decisions. I remember thinking at the time: This is such a mature attitude! What I did not realize until years later was this was also allowing them to make bad decisions! If I had been more in touch with the Lord back then and read the Bible, I might have realized that, ever since the Fall,

the heart of man, even little hearts, are inclined to evil and bad decisions. My children would have been a lot better prepared for life if I had paid more attention to them being on the right path and less attention to what they desired. I think that is real parenting.

The necessity of strong, functional, connected families is crucial to our welfare as a country. To help describe what a strong, functional, connected family looks like I am going to include the following excerpts of a speech given by Ms. Mitzi Perdue at the 30th Educational Policy Conference in January 2019: (This is adapted from an article appearing in the publication “Front Line,” Volume XL, No 1, dated April 29, 2019).

Keeping the Family Together

“Can you put a price on having a high-functioning, intact family? In theory, you can’t, but in practice, I can. I intend to make a case that putting the time and effort into cultivating family harmony is the best possible investment any of us can make. Let’s start!”

Ms. Perdue then described an encounter with Karla, a friend whose family had fallen apart to the point where she felt she had no family to talk to or spend time with.

Family Harmony

Ms. Perdue: *“Karla would have given every penny she had, because no amount of money could make up for the pain of not having a family. Let’s think about this for a moment. Your deepest happiness or your deepest misery will come from your intimate relationships. When these relationships go badly, the pain can permeate every hour of every day. Money can’t make up for that. What good does it do to succeed financially if you fail as a family?”*

“So, what can the rest of us do to avoid being part of a story like Karla’s? Every family has a culture, but is it one that came about by accident or by default? Karla’s family left it to accident whether she’d learn some crucial values such as: relationships are more important than money, and you can’t always be right. Stories are the way we instill our culture. Whether it’s an individual or a family (or for that matter, even a nation), we are the stories we tell ourselves.”

“We can’t leave it to accident...or actually we can leave it to accident, but if we do, we risk the kind of outcome I just described with Karla and (her brother) Joe. Brain scientists tell us that we are wired to remember and be influenced by stories. Stories are important because they give us direction. Stories bind us together, and its stories that make us who we are. They’re like little computer programs, guiding us in how we react to things. So, the way to instill

values is through the stories we tell. And doing that takes time. It means spending time together! And that means making spending time together a priority.”

Family Meals

“The best and most practical way for most families (to spend time together) is having meals together. About 40% of American families eat three meals or fewer together a week. 10% of families have no meals at all together. If you divide families with three or less meals together in the course of a week and those who have five or more meals a week together, an extraordinary pattern emerges. The families that spend time together by having the most meals together have the following benefits:

They have better relationships with their parents.

They do better in school.

They stay in school longer.

They’re less vulnerable to drugs and other substance abuse.

They’re less likely to have trouble with the law.

They’re less likely to be involved in teen pregnancy.

They have less depression.

They have less obesity.

They’re less vulnerable to eating disorders.

Having meals together isn’t going to cure all dysfunction, but it’s something you can do to improve your odds of have a high-functioning family. By the way, I know this isn’t easy.

Between work and school activities, this is hard, hard, hard. However, when you have the choice of having a meal together or not, pick having the meal together.

Making a habit of this is one of the best things you can do for your kids. That’s your time for emotionally connecting with them and instilling in them the values that can give them the best chance of a healthy and fulfilling life.”

An important story for those of us who might wonder what does a highly functioning family look like? Ms. Perdue has given us an example. By the way, in the Chapter of this book entitled ‘References and Resources,’ will be listed a book by Ms. Purdue on keeping families connected.

Let us talk about the children.

The first thing to be said is that: Children are a Blessing from God.

We are expected to love them, feed them, clothe them, take care of them and teach them. Wouldn't it be great if every child were born into a kind and loving home, where they are respected and valued; where they learn what it means to be kind, loving, trustworthy and trustful? In this home, the child would never know abuse of any kind, but only what it feels like to be unconditionally loved.

When we become parents, isn't that our goal: to be loving parents raising loving children to the best of our ability? However, we are human - flawed humans and we often fall short. Therefore, we need help and guidance. This is one of the reasons this book is being written; to point out that there are Natural Laws, which provide guidance in our lives and will help us when we fall short. The best guidebook for raising children, as well as many other areas of human behavior is The Book of Proverbs. In these thirty-one proverbs written primarily by King Solomon are many lessons for raising children. If you will let this little book be your guide, you will be well on your way to raising a child who will be disciplined, knowledgeable and confident.

Following is a devotional reading by Mr. Mike Singletary, the legendary middle linebacker for the Chicago Bears NFL team. He was named the "1990 NFL Man of the Year" for his on-field performance and dedicated community service. Mr. Singletary wrote two books: "Calling the Shots" and "Singletary on Singletary". I am not sure which of his books this is from. I found it on page 1296 of a 'Men's Devotional Bible' published by Zondervan and copyrighted in 1993:

"Set Them an Example"

"I DON'T mind being a role model. I'm flattered when people say they'd like their kids to be like me. To me, being a role model is a heavy responsibility and a gift from God. I accept it openheartedly. But at the same time, I don't feel I should become more important in a kid's life than his father and mother. Very few kids ever actually emulate their heroes. They do what their parents did. Parents are the most important role models in their children's live, for good or bad.

I may be signing autographs somewhere and a single mom will come up with her son. She'll say, "I'm so glad he got to meet you because you're his hero, and he'll do what you say. If you tell him to listen to his mother and do what I tell him, he'll do it."

That's sad. I often give them both a little encouragement, but I'd rather that kid know that I'm human too. I came from a broken home too. I knew what it was to be disappointed in my father and to be raised by my mother. That mom has the toughest job because she will serve as both the father and the mother role model for that child. He may admire me and look up to me or some other celebrity, but when the chips are down, he'll pattern his life after his parents. If we've got a role model crisis in this country, it's because parents are not good ones."

This article from Mike Singletary is almost thirty years old - sounds to me like it could have been written today.

We have talked about what it takes to be a functioning family and just concluded some advice from Mr. Mike Singletary on being a role model. All good information.

I hope you are not surprised by this statement, but I have to tell you:

Your Family Is Under Assault.

After this Chapter, we are going to talk about other Truths, which are problems in our Society. Most of these are an assault on your family, such as: School Shootings, Abortions, Drugs & Alcohol, Education, Sexuality, Suicide and others. All of these issues have at least one thing in common - Every one of these issues is a Danger to Your Family.

However, before we move on there are three other family issues I want to talk to you about: Marriage, Divorce and Parenting.

(1)_Marriage:_The percentage of people getting married is decreasing. I personally know people who are living together, who have children together, but are not married. I do not understand. How do you explain that situation to your children? To the rest of your family? On the surface, it looks like a lack of commitment? Or a fear of divorce? Please read the above statement from Mike Singletary again - he's right you know - you are the example for your children. Your behavior is what they will emulate. Please consider setting this right. Being married to the father or mother of your children speaks volumes to them.

(2) Divorce: I must say right up front that I am divorced. After eighteen years of marriage we separated and were divorced two years later. It was devastating; I suppose most divorces are. When we separated, my children were sixteen and twelve years old. They were not young children, but they weren't old enough to be unaffected. To this day, almost 30 years later, they have not fully recovered. I have talked to other people in the same situation and they tell similar stories. I guess it goes without saying that the younger the children are when the divorce occurs;

the more likely they are to be affected. We used to say victims of divorce were from a 'broken-family,' that seems like a pretty good description. So, why am I telling you this? I admitted my credibility in this area is not good, but the word 'Truth' is in the title of the book and I must be honest with you. My point is: Divorce is bad and will have far-reaching consequences. Please do not take it lightly.

Someone whose credibility is intact regarding marriage and divorce is the Reverend Billy Graham; he and his wife Ruth were married from 1943 until her death in 2007. Dr. Graham had the following to say about marriage and divorce:

"One of the primary reasons for the breakdown of the home is that we have forgotten God's commands about marriage. God gave marriage to us, and His standards have not changed. Jesus said, **"A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate"** (Matthew 19:5-6). Divorce was not part of God's original design - nor is it now. The Bible declares, "The Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce" (Malachi 2:16). Marriage is a symbol of the unity between Christ and His church - a unity that should never be torn. No marriage is beyond repair with God's help. But we must humble ourselves and put aside our pride and self-will. We must put others ahead of ourselves. If divorce has happened to you, God can forgive the past, heal the present, and give you hope for the future. But if you are married, treasure your spouse as a gift from God, and yield your marriage to Christ."

Google tells me that in 2018 there were 13.6 million single parents in the United States and 16% or roughly 2,176,000 of them are single Fathers. Doing the math tells me there were 11,424,000 'Single Moms' in 2018; women that I think must be the hardest working people on the planet. My hat is off to all Single Parents. My prayers and congratulations go out to you. Keep up the good work. I respect you and your efforts.

One group that I do not have a lot of respect for are 'Dead-Beat Dads' - men who do not want to step up and accept responsibility for their children, often leaving the mother of the children to take full responsibility for the upbringing and welfare of the children. I do not know if one 'Dead-Beat Dad' equals one 'Single-Mom', but it sure appears to me that there are too many men Missing-In-Action. Incidentally, men's traditional role in the family is to be the Provider and the Protector. Fellows, if you refuse to provide and you are MIA, you are not acting right; you are not doing what you are supposed to be doing. Therefore, if you are not providing and not

protecting, that means the mother of your children has to be performing those roles, as well as her traditional roles, which is pretty much taking care of everything else, which has not changed very much since time began. So, men, time to step up. Turn off the video game. Get out of your mother's basement and start making a difference in your child's life - that child only has one chance to grow up; he/she needs you.

(3) Parenting: Being a Parent covers a lot of territory. Husband, Wife, Father, Mother, role-model (often times when you are not at your best), cook, laundress, house cleaner, maintenance and yard man, chauffeur, counselor, teacher, coach and plenty of other tasks - all important. Right now, I want to give you some food for thought:

(a) Offensive Language: Does this bother you? Specifically, I am offended by the language on network TV (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox) during prime time viewing and on talk radio. My primary complaint is that children are watching and listening; trust me, your children will pick up that kind of language soon enough. I wonder who the networks think their customers are. This has an effect on your family and our society - it is not raising us to a higher moral level. Anyway, you probably get the point.

(b) Working Mothers: I run the risk of looking slow-witted or having lived a sheltered life with this story, but I did promise to tell you the Truth. In the year I turned 50 years old, I over-heard a co-worker, who had recently become a father, complain that his wife needed to get back to work, the bills were piling up. To me, he was implying his wife was loafing and not carrying her weight. I could not believe what I was hearing. I believe, to this day, that it is the man's responsibility to Provide and Protect, not the wife's. I knew that, ever since World War II, more and more women had entered the workforce. In my naiveté, I thought women were working outside the home to provide money for additional, nice to have items, or for self-satisfaction. That was the first time I had ever heard a man complain that his wife was not bringing in her share of income. Just a few years later, I heard a relative voice the same complaint. At that point, I knew I was experiencing a cultural shift and, in my opinion, not one lifting us to a higher moral level. Currently, twenty plus years later, I see young couples with small children moving into homes with price tags of \$250,000 and more and driving automobiles costing \$20,000, at a minimum, and I can see that the lifestyle probably costs more than one income can provide. So, let me ask you a question: Do you ever think about cutting back? Get a smaller house? Drive an

older, less expensive car? Cut back on some of the activities? When all is said and done, your children will cherish the time you spent together - more than the toys and frills.

(c) Most of you will probably have trouble believing what I am going to say next, but it is true. What happened to Sundays? It used to be the case that Sunday's were a day for the family. Most stores were closed and the family would rest, relax, and perhaps have a family meal. A time to recharge. Now, all the shopping centers are open, the kids are even playing organized sports on Sunday morning. When do you relax? When do you rest? How about just determining in your mind that you are going to keep Sunday for yourself and your family. Rearrange your schedule to get all that other stuff done in the other six days. Wouldn't you like a day to yourself? I believe the benefits of a day of rest would be remarkable. Maybe you will even find time to go to Church? Please take the kids with you. It will be good for all of you.

In writing this Chapter I have discovered an overwhelming plethora of information on Families. I am, at the same time, wondering if I should write more or if I should not. I am opting for not. But you should know there is plenty of information available, as I said a plethora. As I mentioned earlier, I will include some References and Resources in a later chapter.

I want to leave this subject with a word of encouragement. You do not have to be a Super Dad or a Super Mom to have a Super Family. The primary tool you need is Love in your heart. I would also encourage you to turn to God for help and guidance He is always anxious to hear from you. Finding a church, a Biblically based church, which means one that preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ, can help you tremendously; most will have children's programs from pre-school through high school. It has worked wonders in my life.

We are going to move on to a discussion about Education in the next chapter. Thanks for being here.

Quotation:

***"I have always said, and always will say,
that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens,
better fathers, and better husbands."***

Thomas Jefferson
American Founding Father,
the principal author of the Declaration of Independence,
and the third President of the United States

Quotation:

*“Let your eyes look straight ahead,
And your eyelids look right before you.
Ponder the path of your feet,
And let all your ways be established.
Do not turn to the right or the left;
Remove your foot from evil.”*

Proverbs 4:25-27

LENO Watch: The last time all four of our friends were together they talked about how their thoughts and feelings regarding family had evolved. Like most of us, they took family for granted: there was Mom & Dad and Grandma & Grandpa and Uncles & Aunts and Cousins. They had grown-up with these people around and they did not give them a lot of thought.

Even when they were married, although technically qualified, they did not really think too much about being a family. But both Liam & Emma and Noah & Olivia testified that when that first child came along, it hit them like a ton of bricks: they were a family! They suddenly came face-to-face with the reality of what that meant: They had received a gift from God and they were going to be responsible for taking care of, nurturing and loving that Gift - that child. Like most first-time parents, it was initially over-whelming, but with time and a lot of calls to both Grandmas, they got through those first few months and then the first few years.

All four soon realized that the requirements for being a parent and the skills required were changing pretty quickly. They still had not yet realized that the requirements would be changing, evolving, for the rest of their lives.

Mercifully, none of them could envision the highs and the lows, the roller-coaster of situations and emotions: joy, fright, sadness, excitement, anticipation, pride, guilt, happiness that was coming their way.

They only knew that they were blessed with something special and with the Lord's help and a lot of prayer, they were going to be the best parents ever.