



Foundations of

FAITH

The Christian Home

Lesson 21

The family is of divine origin. It had its beginning in the Garden of Eden when God, seeing that it was not good for the first man to be alone, made “an help meet for him.” He caused a sleep to come upon Adam and from his side he created a woman and brought her to the man. “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Gen. 2:23, 24)

Jesus also endorsed this teaching. “And he answered and said unto them, have you not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matt. 19:4-6)

THE PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE. The purposes of marriage are: (1) to **provide companionship.** “And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” (Gen. 2:18) “God setteth the solitary in families.” (Psalm 68:6) (2) to **avoid adultery and fornication** (now often described as “relationships.”) “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” (1 Cor. 7:2) (3) to **bring up the next generation.** “And God blessed them and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it ...” (Gen. 1:28)

MARRIAGE IS NOT A SACRAMENT. The New Testament says nothing about how a marriage ceremony should be carried out. In those days it appears to have been celebrated with a feast at home. (See John 2:1 and Matt. 25:1) Therefore it is quite scriptural to be married by a civil registrar or in whatever way the law of a country requires. Christians may wish to make their vows in the presence of fellow-believers, but no church ceremony is required to make a marriage valid. The important thing is that it should be a public commitment to a lifelong union between a man and a woman. It should therefore be a serious undertaking, not an excuse for a party.

WHOM TO MARRY. A Christian should seek to marry a fellow-Christian, and thus hope to avoid a great number of extra problems which may arise. “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14) See also 1 Cor. 7:39. where Paul writes that a widow may be married to whom she chooses, but “only in the Lord.” It is by no means certain that a prospective marriage partner will be converted.

In particular, questions might arise as to how any children of a mixed marriage would be brought up, and whether they would follow their father’s or mother’s religion or, as often happens, no religion at all.

UNSELFISH LOVE. Christian love is needed in all walks of life, but especially within the family. “Charity (love) suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not

behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (1 Cor. 13:4-7)

THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND. The husband is the head of the household. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." (Eph. 5:23-24)

But the husband should rule with love. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." (Eph. 2:25) "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." (Eph. 2:28) "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life." (1 Peter 3:7)

The husband is usually also the main provider for the family (and this would have included widows in New Testament times). "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. (1 Tim. 5:8)

THE ROLE OF THE WIFE. The scriptures teach that there cannot be complete equality between men and women. "...and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you (Gen. 3:16) "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord; husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them." (Col. 3:18-19)

The older women should instruct the younger. (Titus 2:4-5) "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

Although wives should be keepers at home (and not go about gossiping as did some idle widows mentioned in 1 Tim. 5:13), this does not mean they are to be strictly confined to housework. Compare Proverbs 31:10-31. The woman described there whose "price is far above rubies" was praised by her husband and children for industriously buying and selling and contributing to the family finances. Also note that Priscilla apparently worked with her

husband Aquila as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3), besides helping to teach Apollos (Acts 18:26).

THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY MARRIED BEFORE HEARING THE GOSPEL. If people are already married before becoming Christians, they should try to hold their marriage together. "For what know you, O wife, whether you shall save thy husband? Or how know you, O man, whether you shalt save your wife?" (1 Cor. 7:16) "Likewise, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation (*life-style*) of their wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with respect." (1 Pet. 3:2)

"But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God has called us to peace." (1 Cor. 7:15)

CHILDREN. Fathers and mothers should endeavour to bring up their children in the Lord by setting an example for them to follow, and should not rely on the church to teach them once a week. Grandparents also (2 Tim. 1:5) can pass on their faith and teach scripture (2 Tim. 3:15).

"Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour your father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with you, and thou may live long on the earth. And you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:1-4)

There are no excuses for rebellious teenagers here. Fathers and mothers should keep children under reasonable control for their own good. But in their anxiety to bring up their children as believers, parents should not discourage them by, for instance, excessive fault-finding, and remember the saying that Christianity is caught rather than taught.

DIVORCE. When the Pharisees asked Jesus about divorce, he replied, "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female ... What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." (Mark 10:6)

Paul writes "And to the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her

husband: but and if she does depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.” (1 Cor. 7:10)

THE SINGLE LIFE. It may happen that, for some reason such as the ‘present distress’ mentioned in 1 Cor. 7:26-27, it is better for the Christian to remain single.

Paul writes, “I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I.” (1 Cor. 7:8) He gives this as his own opinion not a command of the Lord and continues “He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is this difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried

woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married cares for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” (1 Cor. 7:32-34)

The New Testament says nothing about orders of monks or nuns, or celibate priests, and does not teach that the single life is better than marriage. Jesus himself indicated that it was only suitable for certain people. (Matt. 19: 11,12) Most of the apostles were married (1 Cor. 9:5) and, as will appear in a following lesson, elders and deacons must be married men.

Some notable single women are mentioned in the New Testament such as Martha and her sister Mary (John 11), and some who were possibly single, including Lydia (Acts 16:14, 15) and Dorcas (Acts 9:36).

TEST ON LESSON 21

Write true or false after the following statements:

1. Adam was allowed more than one wife.
2. “Living together” unmarried is condemned as fornication.
3. A marriage must take place in a church building.
4. A widow should marry “in the Lord”, i.e. another Christian.
5. An unmarried person cares for the things of the Lord.
6. A wife should leave an unbelieving husband.
7. Children are told to obey their parents.
8. We should aim for the complete equality of men and women.

List three purposes of marriage:

1.
2.
3.

Ephesians 5:23 compares the relationship of the husband and the wife to that of Christ and the church. Read these verses and then fill in the blanks:

The is the head of the as Christ is the head of the

Therefore are to be subject to their as the church is subject to Christ. On the other hand, husbands are to their wives as loved the church and gave himself for it. Men should love their wives as their own A man shall leave his and and cleave to his so that the two of them may be one

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Answers

These lessons are based on the King James Version, so if you are using another translation the words employed may vary slightly. Sometimes an alternative answer is possible. The following is a useful guide.

Section 1 – F, T, F, T, T, F, T, F

Section 2 – For companionship,
To avoid adultery or fornication,
To bring up the next generation.

Section 3 – Husband, Wife, Church, Wives, Husbands, Love, Christ, Bodies, Father, Mother, Wife, Flesh.

Enquiries to - graemestudy@gmail.com