

GUIDELINES FOR STRENGTHENING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

In my last contribution I stated that we need to look at family relationships particularly in the light of the fact that this year we are celebrating the international year of the family.

There are four basic institutions that contribute to a stable society : the church, the school, the state, and the home. All four play a vital role and affect individuals, communities and the nation.

In looking at how we can strengthen family relationships it is important that we accept that marriage and the family are of divine origin as seen in gen. 1:27 –28, 31. God instructed his creation to be fruitful and to multiply, and also proclaimed that his creation was good. We can conclude that intended for man and woman to live together in a relationship of love, trust, and mutual helpfulness.

It is also safe to assume that God has provided divine laws to safeguard marriage and the home. One of the Ten Commandments emphasises the responsibility of the children toward their parents (Ex. 20:12). The seventh commandment emphasises the sacredness of sex and the preservation of purity in the marriage relationship (v. 14). The final commandment forbids the lust that would destroy family stability (v. 17).

A third assumption that we can make is the fact that God has placed responsibility on the parents to teach divine truth to the children (Deut. 6: 4-9).

Before the church, the school, or the state God established the home.

As I see it there are four things that bring failure to family relationships:

Marriages based on nothing more than romanticism. The marriage that has no greater foundation than “ chemistry” is built on an unstable foundation.

Marriages fail because partners refuse to recognize that each must work diligently to achieve success. Success is not automatic or accidental. It must be achieved.

Marriages fail because of the collapse of character on the part of one or both parties in the relationship.

Marriages fail because as parents the couple is not unified in child rearing. Parents must present a unified front, particularly in the matter of disciplining and training of children.

In closing I would like to suggest four things for those who intend marrying:

Recognise that many people are involved in your marriage – your parents, the community, the school, the church, the state, unborn children, you personally and God.

Recognize and respond to the truth that marriage is a divine institution. It should not be entered into lightly or without genuine commitment.

Evaluate the importance of a Christian marriage – the union of two people who recognize and respond to the lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of life.

Remember that marriage is for adults and that it is for keeps. It should be considered as a bond of honour in which the couple makes an unconditional lifetime commitment to so live as to bring happiness to each other and to their children.

Whilst it is true that these principles seem to have vanished and people seem to have different values and concepts it is so encouraging to know that god has not changed and that his standards will keep us together as well as prevent pandemics such as HIV / AIDS.