

## WAR ON THE FAMILY

Why such a title for Christmas?

Why upset you at such a special time of the year?

At the start of this year I informed readers of this column that this year is especially dedicated to the family. Up until now I have endeavoured to share some of the roles and responsibilities that are needed to make the family as a unit function in current conditions prevailing in our country and world.

You will no doubt read articles in this edition geared towards our Christmas period. In fact many of us will be thinking of a well-deserved break and end of the year holiday.

The most stressing thing on our minds will be the Christmas cards that should have been sent, what am I going to give as a Christmas present and what will our Christmas meal be like.

Of course it is also the custom for the pastors and the assemblies to focus on the Christmas story. We may be thinking of portraying Jesus as the special gift of salvation that was sent by God to redeem man from sin or even use this time to share the message of “glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward all men.”(Luke 2:14)

Normally this would be my own approach because it is true that if Jesus was not born we would never have had a Redeemer and all mankind would have perished under the wrath of God. Yes, this would also be the time when I would once more say to people that the very fact that we do have Christmas is proof of the historical existence of Jesus. Yet I wish to go against all traditions and ask you to think of this time as being a war on our families.

The desire of the angels was peace on earth, but today we are faced with escalating wars, and violence. There is no peace in Israel, or in Iraq. Wars and civil unrest still continue to destroy people and families in Africa.

In television news broadcasts we now see that the vehicles of drunken drivers will be permanently taken away, and that this is an effort by the State to try and cut down on the deaths caused by drunken driving. Whilst I might personally support such a drastic move, I must state that this will not stop the domestic violence that is committed under the influence of alcohol, nor will it cut down on the violent crimes that many people will experience during this time.

Peace on earth will be far away for those women who will be raped and those young girls who will be sexually abused. Christmas will not serve as a deterrent to prevent the kidnapping of children, and it will not stop men from battering their wives.

Whilst millions will be at their office parties or even at special church services, most will not even realise that thousands of young people will be infected with HIV, and thousands of children will become AIDS orphans.

To be honest with you, when I read that the Minister of Finance had expressed his concern regarding the high amount that had been set aside for welfare, and that there is a need to cut this in the future, I was horrified.

At present, we do not know how many children are orphans, and we do not have the facilities, or the finances to care for these children. In the space of a few years we are going to be faced with a lot of children and no mothers and fathers. According to statistic for the year 2000 there were over 450,000 orphans and only 149,000 were accommodated in children's homes.

Just imagine a country with children up to the age of 17 years and adults over the age of 40 years and nothing to fill the gap.

What type of family will that be?

How do we all deal with this?

As a Christmas message I wish to challenge your thinking by suggesting that we as the church, the body of Christ, must think of how we are going to minister to children. If we do not place more value on the lives and future of children we are going to be faced with a new generation of people who will have no regard for others and will be our new generation criminals.

Paul in writing to Timothy speaks about the end time conditions in the world and whilst these signs seem to becoming more real, this should not stop us as the Children of God from reaching out to as many lives as possible for the extension of the kingdom of God.( 1Timothy 4:1-10, 2 Timothy 3:1-10).

The Church, with the love and compassion of Jesus Christ as its driving force is to my mind the only hope for these children. Yes! The Church is God's solution to the darkness in this world.

John spoke about a light that came into the world referring to Jesus and today I ask you as the light of the world if you will take up your responsibility and commitment to Jesus and reach out to all the people who are oppressed of the devil.

Let us declare war on the evil powers and principalities that are binding this world and set loose the Spirit of power and victory through Jesus our Lord, Saviour, and coming King.

May you have a Christ centred Christmas.