

## ***WHOLENESS IN MARRIAGE & FAMILY-LIFE***

### **INTRODUCTION**

- 1) In 'The Way To Human Wholeness' series we have seen that all human beings have the same general calling. In marriage and the family this general calling is worked out in particular ways-within the context of a God-given flow of authority.
- 2) This study provides some specific content in terms of the particular callings of husbands & wives and parents & children.
- 3) Wholeness in marriage and family-life is always worked out on the basis of the call of God as it comes to each marriage partner or family member.
- 4) In order to fulfil their respective callings, husbands & wives and parents & children must live in the good of both law of grace.
  - a) God has clearly revealed His holy law in relation to the particular callings of husbands & wives and parents & children. In this we see His wonderful purpose for a man & woman in marriage and for families.
  - b) God's law can only be truly fulfilled within the context of the abundance of His grace. Where there is the joy of freedom from the guilt and shame of sin, there is also the capacity to keep every good commandment which has been given.
  - c) As always, the key to human wholeness is:
    - personal acknowledgement of failure to live truly
    - obedient response to the will of God in the joy of His love and forgiveness

## (A) THE CALLING OF HUSBANDS & WIVES

### 1) The husband is called to love his wife as her God-given head.

(Ephesians 5:25-33; 1 Pet. 3:7; Col. 3:19)

the way of the True Bridegroom

### 2) The wife is called to be subject to her husband as his God-given helper.

(Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 3:1-6; Col. 3:18; Gen. 2:18)

The Way of the True Bride

### 3) There is much confusion today in relation to the matter of authority and submission.

This is the result of a failure to understand the true nature of both of these things.

a) It must be understood that authority is not superiority and submission is not inferiority (e.g. the relationships within the Trinity).

b) Authority is 'author-ity'. That is, it is what is given to enable a person to become an 'author' or a 'source' of blessing towards others. God, as the King of kings and Lord of lords is the Author of every good thing—and the One who ceaselessly serves His creation to bring it to its goal.

c) At 'the Fall' the male/female 'entity' (head/body relationship) became the male/female 'enmity'. Tragically, in history this has produced the twin-evils of 'masculism' and 'feminism'.

d) In the grace of the Gospel both masculism and feminism can be rejected and a true flow of authority can be enjoyed.

### 4) A definition of marriage:

Marriage is a one-flesh union between a man and a woman (effected by God and dissolved only by death), designed to express the relationship between Christ and the Church—and to be the God-given context for the raising up of godly offspring

### 5) True marital vocation is known when both husband and wife:

a) Enjoy communion with the Father together.

b) Enjoy communion with one another.

c) Share together in the works which have been prepared for them (Eph. 2:10).

[a marriage which is not going somewhere for the Kingdom of God is a marriage which is not going anywhere!]

### 6) By the grace of God, any husband or wife can live truly—with much personal joy even in the midst of an imperfect marital situation.

a) Both husband wife must take 100% responsibility for the fulfillment of their particular marital calling.

- b) A husband is called to be a 100 % husband, even if he has a 0 % wife; and a wife is called to be a 100 % wife, Even if she has a 0% husband. As has been shown in an earlier study, this is an expression of the nature of true love-'agape' (unconditional) as opposed to 'eros' (conditional).
- c) When failure to fulfil one's marital calling is acknowledged, the joy of fellowship with the Father is known-and the capacity to happily press on as a true husband or wife is present.

**7) Some errors to be avoided in marriage include:**

- a) 'Authoritarianism'-" I'm the top-dog."
- b) 'Egalitarianism'-" no one has to be in charge."
- c) 'Individualism'-" I'll do my own thing."
- d) 'Perfectionism'—"but it shouldn't be like this!"

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## **(B) THE CALLING OF PARENTS**

### **1) Parents are to avoid the provocation of their children to wrath.**

(Ephesians 6:4; Col. 3:21)

*not being the 'dark' dad or mum*

- a) Fathers and mothers must live in the freedom of God's great grace in order to remain serene and affectionate in the raising of their children-rather than fearful and reactionary.
- b) Knowing that all parental sins are forgiven, that enjoyment of the Father's love is not dependent upon personal performance, and that He is sovereign even over the worst parental blunders, enables parents to relate to their children in a way which is not unnecessarily provocative.

### **2) Parents are to tenderly rear their children to maturity.**

(Ephesians 6:4)

*the way of the True Father*

#### **a) Bringing them up in the discipline/training of the Lord.**

(Proverbs 216)

##### **i) the 3 D's of corporal punishment**

(Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 23:13,14; 22:15; 29:15,17) discipline for. disobedience disrespect dishonesty

##### **ii) the 3 D's of non-corporal punishment**

discipline by:

- denial (the principle of 'limitation'-withholding pleasure or privilege)
- discomfort (the principle of 'labour'—giving extra jobs, 'lines' etc)
- distress (the principle of 'liability'- allowing natural consequences)

being careful to - think it through-knowing it is appropriate

- make it known-presenting a clearly defined judgment
- carry it out-seeing it through to the end

##### **iii) verbal rebuke & correction appreciating:**

- its nature-'a warning signal'
- its purpose-to change a trend (Genesis 4:6,7) expressing the principles of:

confrontation—defining the problem redirection—outlining the solution affirmation—recognising what is praiseworthy (1 Cor. 11:2,17) affection—the communication of unconditional acceptance

note: true 'discipline' is never 'abuse'—attacking the problem rather than the person

**b) Bringing them up in the instruction/admonition of the Lord.**

(Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

parents should remember the gift of prayer

- illumination & revelation is the Lord's work! (Ephesians 1:17; Isaiah 54:13)

fathers should remember the call to 'rule'

- a father must not 'cave-in' to the demands of his children (1 Timothy 3:4/5:17)

**3) True parenthood is always expressed within the context of given-ness to the work of the Kingdom of God.**

(Matthew 6:33; 28:18-20) walking the 'relational tight-rope'

a) Parents should never neglect their families for the work of the Gospel (1 Tim. 5:8); but neither should they allow their family-life to be reduced to a level of perpetual self-interest.

b) Although neglect is always wrong, there *are* certain sacrifices which are appropriate for families to make for the sake of the Gospel, as a reflection of the Father's nature as Redeemer.

c) It is a wonderful thing for a family to understand that it exists for something far grander than itself—the Kingdom of God.

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## (C) THE CALLING OF CHILDREN

### 1) Children are to obey their parents in the Lord.

(Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20; Luke 2:51; Proverbs 15:20, 5; 17:25)

because it is right-the way of the True Son

### 2) Children are to honour their father and mother.

(Ephesians 6:2,3; Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 20:9)

'that it may be well with you'

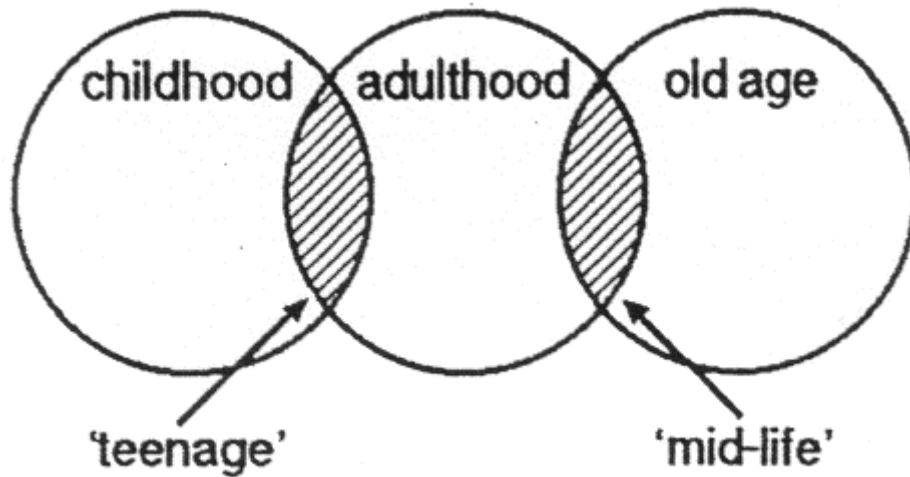
- a) Parents are worthy of honour because it is God who has given them parenthood. (Romans 13:1,2; 1 Peter 2:13,14)
- b) 'Child' is the most basic category of human being. By nature, all are primarily children' to the Heavenly Father (vertically) and to earthly parents (horizontally).
- c) The honour of father and mother provides a well-spring of masculinity or femininity in a person's life.
- d) None can ultimately be any better husband or wife, or father or mother, than they have been son or daughter (or brother or sister).
- e) All masculine or feminine frustration and perversion comes from the failure to honour father and mother.

### 3) The family is the God-given context for growth in wisdom, stature and favour with God & man.

(Luke 2:52)

*home-the primary place of all true masculine & feminine development*

- a) The 'teenage' years are a time for development into true manhood or womanhood within the family.
- b) If true masculine or feminine development does not take place during these 'family years', this will inevitably lead to personal crisis during the years of 'mid-life' (or earlier)—when the unresolved frustrations of 'teenagehood' return.



## CONCLUSION

Wholeness in marriage and family-life is known only in the light of what the Scriptures have revealed to be the particular calling of each marriage partner or family member.

When this calling is embraced in the joy of forgiveness and the Father's love, True marital and familial healing can take place-or at least, particular marriage partners or family members can press on in love and serenity.