

Building stronger marriages and families

Marriage rates are falling, and divorce rates are rising.
There are many books on helping to build relationships, but for the Christian, God's manual is our guide for life.

Five points: Genesis 2.18-24

1. God created marriage as a loyal partnership between one man and one woman.

But the Amendment Act 2013 says: Marriage is between two people regardless of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Discuss the consequences of this in our society. Will it build up or break down? Is it helpful or harmful? Why?

2. Marriage is the firmest foundation for building a family and society.
Is this true? If so, how does it help to build?

3. God designed sexual expression to help married couples build intimacy and a permanent bond.
Is today's permissive society harming both marriage and our younger generation?

4. Marriage is the full expression and design of God's image in human beings.
In what ways is this so? What do we learn about God from marriage as he designed it?

5. Marriage is a platform to practice the same qualities and characteristics as Christ. See eg. Ephesians 5.22-33, where husbands and wives both need to practice submission to each other.
How easy is this?

Three nutrients

1 Corinthians 13.3. Faith, love and hope.

These are not always easy to apply. From the video:

Faith is risky – in what way? What do we need to have faith in? Do we always need to understand everything? Does God always answer our prayers?

Hope is risky - What about times of tragedy, suffering? What is our hope based on? Is God's will for me always for my good? If so, why is life often so difficult?

Love is risky. We hurt other people and we get hurt. We keep a record of wrongs done to us. We keep going, but we don't always get it right. What is your definition of love – real love? Why is love the greatest of the three?

God's manual for families

The family is a laboratory for the application of biblical truth in a biblical setting.

Bob and Michelle Duggar, with 19 children, have five 'helps':

1. Turn off the TV
2. Less toys is more
3. Teach the Bible
4. Show that prayer works
5. Pray for them daily.

What do you consider are the necessary steps for a spiritually healthy family?

God's manual for Seniors

The temptations in senior years are not usually moral sins, but more subtle sins of the spirit.

1. A critical spirit – is sometimes a way of getting attention and reminding people we were once important. What should we do instead of criticizing?

2. Spiritual retirement – Don't ever retire. Your experience, prayer, and input is needed.

However, many churches won't let older people take an active or upfront role. What is your experience if you are a senior? Women too are kept in their place often – but is it where God would use them? Does this hinder God's work, or is he able to use them anyway?

3. Inclination towards inflexibility. I know what is right and the right way to do it, and that's how it should be done. This attitude doesn't allow God to do what he wants in the way he wants to do it.

4. Feelings of regret. Why did I behave like that? Don't dwell on the past – move on. Paul knew the importance of this – see Philippians 3.13. We may be disappointed in ourselves, but God always knew exactly what we would do, and therefore he is never disappointed in us, he simply waits for us to repent of sin and useless regret and receive his forgiveness and then he can continue to work through us.

5. A tendency to worry. Worry drags us away from God's plan. Matthew 6.25-33. What does worry achieve? What is the antidote to worry? Philippians 4.6-7 What should we do instead of worrying? And what is the promised result?

The important thing to know, is that if our heart is right, God is able to work through us no matter what the situation we may be in. As we trust in him and follow his guidelines, our marriages, our families, our older years, can all be a means of blessing others.