

BECOMING A BIBLICAL FAMILY TODAY Part 3

Written by Calvin Fox

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Among the primary forces, especially in the last 150 years, that have undermined this Biblical Model are Urbanization (leaving the farm to live in urban areas for jobs, career); Individualization (the desire and freedom to "move out" to find and be who one is as an individual (a variety of Liberation and Rights Movements and changing Laws contributed to this). In the Biblical Model, Self identity and preservation are found within the Family; Industrialization and the accompanying Commercialization- getting jobs outside the Home and having the mobility (the car and train) to do that; the Welfare State assuming the duties of parents such as Protection, Education, Health care and Retirement. Immigration and Travel (including the Wars) and Entertainment (movies, Jazz, etc) also were factors that influenced change in morals and mores. All these developments have a corrosive effect on the Biblical Family Model. Of course, Liberalism and Secularism undermined its religious foundation.

All that said, if the Bible and what it teaches about God and Holiness are important and is to be the context in which we are to make decisions (and Policies) about Marriage and Family, this short sketch outlines what we must seek to recover and preserve. The challenge is "how".

Reaffirmation of a commitment to God, His Word and Holiness is the place to begin. It requires a determination to be a Biblical Family or as close to it as is possible. We usually attend Worship together. Many of us give a portion of our income, if not the Tithe, to the Lord. But many of us do not keep the Sabbath as such. And parents do try to teach their children about the Bible, God and Christian living, although the often rely on Sunday School to do most of that. Few Christians teach the Law (the Torah) to their children. But most of us make a good effort to keep the Second Tablet Commands. The greatest challenge to following the Biblical Model for Marriage and Family is with the matter of family relations.

As I wrote above, the Biblical family was and is not today's nuclear or permissive, child-centered family. It was patriarchal and multi-generational and largely self-supporting, seeking to meet the basic needs of its members. And each of those sought to contribute to all the others as able. This cuts across the individualism that is deeply engrained in American Culture. In a Biblical Culture, the individual members of the Family look for self-identity and a secure, meaningful God-centered life within the Family. This simply is not what modern Americans want to do, Christians included. It is especially true if their family is dysfunctional and a painful place. And those who become Christians as adults do not want to find "who they are" in the non-Christian family they grew up in, even if it were a happy one.

Pursuing the Biblical Family Model requires a repudiation of many of the values and pursuits of

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modern Society. To be a Biblical family requires that its members live close enough to be involved with and responsible to each other. Family life requires time and opportunity to be together. That means avoiding the anti-family pace and pressure of a bustling City and Career, as well as avoiding the cookie-cutter and commuting-controlled lifestyle of the suburbs.

How a family is to function is described well in what Jesus and the Apostles teach about the local church. It may very well be, in our fractured urban Society, the New Testament church that shall be the place in which the Family that is God-centered and Holy survives. For many of us it is too late to turn back the clock to follow the Biblical Model completely, but with God's help, we can seek to follow it however and wherever we can, teaching our children to do better. God's Holiness demands it.