

FAMILIES ARE IMPORTANT

Family plays an important role in the life of the individual believer. Beginning with Adam, all human beings have come into this world with certain needs that can be satisfied only in intimate relationships with other people. The first man, fresh from the creative fingers of God, with a Creator to worship, a beautiful world to behold and countless creatures to enjoy, nevertheless sought for special human companionship. For him, as for those ever after, God instituted the family as the primary provision for the intimate relationships for which the human heart yearns.

The family then, is divinely-ordained. It was instituted at creation with the union of Adam and Eve. It is as old as Eden and is lodged firmly in the history of God's people through the ages. Scripture abounds with teaching concerning the family.

In this circle of the family, one's deep and abiding needs for belonging, for love, for intimacy and for social contact are to be met. It is here that the establishment of identity and the development of personal worth take place. Here the earliest work in the socialization of the individual occurs; values are implanted in the young and are transmitted from one generation to the next. By God's grace the family may be a powerful agency for the discipling of its members for Christ.

Substantial revelation concerning the divine purpose for the family has been given. Practical principles for family living regarding the relationships of husbands, wives and children are found in such passages as Ephesians 5:21-6:4. God's relationship with His people is often presented as the model of human relationships (1 John 3:16; Eph. 4:32; 5:25). In addition to God's plan that the family operate so as to meet the special needs of persons, God intends that we and the world should gain a revelation of Him and His ways from relationships in our families (Ps. 103:13; Is. 54:5).

Family is considered so special, so significant that domestic imagery is used to convey theological truths and to give comfort and encouragement (Is. 49:15; Jer. 31:32; Eph. 2:19; Rev. 21:2). As described in Malachi 4:5, 6, family is in focus during last day events. In this passage the Bible predicts that before the great day of the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, God will give a final heart-turning call designed to turn this generation toward Him and family members toward each other.

Home and family was a favorite subject and frequently addressed by Ellen G. White. These quotations are indicative of her view of the strategic importance of the Christian home:

"The restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home. The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the 'issues of life' (Proverbs 4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences." *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349.

"Far more powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human hearts and lives." *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 352.

"The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart." *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 304.
"Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home. . . . By many this home field has been shamefully neglected and it is time that divine resources and remedies were presented, that this state of evil may be corrected." *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 429, 430.

"If we will open our hearts and homes to the divine principles of life, we shall become channels

for currents of life-giving power. From our homes will flow streams of healing, bringing life, and beauty, and fruitfulness where now are barrenness and dearth." *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 355.