

Family Legacy Institute

Tools For Families Building Godly Legacies

Priorities That Strengthen Marriage

I. Biblical Basis

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Mt. 6:33 ~ NIV).

Those who won't care for their own relatives, especially those living in the same household, have denied what we believe. Such people are worse than unbelievers (1 Tim. 5:8 ~ NLT).

The love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows (1 Tim 6:10 ~ NLT).

As (a person) thinks within himself, so he is (Prov 23:7 ~ NASV).

II. Introduction

The culture in which we live today is almost unrecognizable as compared with the culture of our great-grandparents. The majority of our great-grandparents were farmers. Electricity was still being integrated into their culture. Lucky families might have one car and one radio. The telephone was a newcomer. People didn't travel much. Many never left the county in which they were born. Families basically stayed in the same region. Kids knew their grandparents and cousins as "close family." All that changed between 1940-1950.

A. Rise Of Dual-Income Family Systems

The period of the late forties and the fifties saw two powerful forces dramatically re-shape the family identity and family system in Western Culture. The first dynamic involved women leaving the home and entering the workplace. During World War II, as men left their homes and jobs to fight on the battlefield, women filled the workplace void in great numbers. Rosie the Riveter became a common identity point as women stepped into jobs formerly held by men. After the war, large percentages of women didn't return to their homes. They kept their jobs as they raised their kids. Today most households have dual incomes, which allows for a higher standard of living but which also leads to weaker family connections.

B. Explosion Of Consumer Goods

The second reshaping force was an explosion of consumer goods production and sales. People began to realize that they could indeed have the house with white picket fence in the suburbs, a car (perhaps even two cars), a TV, and 2.3 children. The “American Dream” began to mean having a good investment portfolio and nice summer vacations. Twenty percent of the culture moved every year to some new geographical location as people chased career options. By the mid-1960s, two cars per family had become the norm. Most people had TVs and color TV was the new rage. Now everyone needed a “stereo” too. The concept of “need” became redefined as advertisers became more sophisticated in marketing their wares.

As the explosion of consumer goods ripped at the fabric of the family, kids began to express their frustration and hurt at their parents’ values. The Beatles wrote a hit song about a girl who left home ~ her parents had given her everything but themselves. Bob Dylan wrote, “The Times They Are A-Changing.” Fifteen years later Harry Chapin sang, “Cats in the Cradle,” but the genie was out of the bottle ~ moms and dads weren’t listening ~ family systems were now being openly sacrificed in favor of consumer goods.

C. Rise Of TV, Computers, Internet

Today’s culture is filled with the most amazing “options.” TV and the internet provide access to an incredible field of entertainment and education. Everyone now knows that the average kid will spend more time watching TV, than any other single activity in their lives from birth through high school. The advent of the personal computer and the internet opened a universe of knowledge and international connections. TV, computers and the internet have also provided a ready source of moral degradation including sexual addiction and child abuse.

D. Rise Of Children’s “Performance” Options

Athletics have never been as popular as they are today, with children beginning to compete in organized sports as early as age six. Families often spend several weekends during the sporting season in hotels as their first-grader’s team competes for a plastic trophy, and as coaches drive their little competitors to ever greater technical proficiency. The same dynamic is alive and well within music, dance, and other venues involving kids in “performance” or “competitive” situations. Today, if a child wishes to compete or perform in high school, they almost need to have been preparing in their chosen area during grade school and junior high school years. This dynamic has become a controlling force within family systems. Many families spend many weekends a year in a motel in some other town, as their child performs or competes with other children.

E. Demise Of The “Traditional” Family System

The “traditional family” with dad working and mom solely engaged in the home used to reflect the majority of family systems in the culture. But twenty years ago in 1985, Betty Friedan wrote, “The traditional household is fast becoming a relic of the past. Fewer than 10% of families fit into the traditional ideal of working father, stay-at-home mother, and children (Friedan, B., 1985. How to get the womens movement moving again. New York Times, Nov. 3). Friedan was quite

outdated when she made that observation. By 1985 some estimates had the “traditional family” at 4% of the general population.