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## Foundations for Families – Family context

### 1 Scriptural Principles – man and woman

*Reading* – 1 John 4:7-11 *Keywords* – love; live; know; sacrifice for our sins

#### Introduction

Being part of a family is one of the great blessings of God. At some stage of our life we have all been part of a family. We were all born of the union of a man and a woman. At the least we had a mother to look after us in the first days of our life. Many of us grew up in a family environment of a mother and father, although we must always be aware that some children grow up in a different environment. Some, for example, may have been left without a natural mother because of her death. Some may have been born outside of marriage and might have never known their father. Some might have been placed into foster care or have been adopted.

Notwithstanding some of these variations, in perhaps the vast majority of circumstances, we have grown up in a family. The prime care may not have been offered by natural parents but, nonetheless, we were still part of a family.

There is a prime need for a family. Human children are born with very little innate ability to look after themselves. We can observe other animals who instinctively search for mother's milk, or foals, for example, who can stand up and walk (or is it totter?) very soon after birth. Human babies need to be helped by the mother (or medical staff) right from the start of life and continue to need that help for considerable time.

Thus, the family, mother and baby, is vital from the beginning. Of course, where it is possible - and this would be in most circumstances - the added, and vital - assistance of the father and other family help can contribute significantly to the well-being of the child and the mother.

When we consider Scriptural principles and examples in the notes, we are looking at the ideal. It is important that we have outstanding models. The fact that we do not always maintain the ideals in our married life is no reason not to strive to reach them. Getting closer to the ideal can be most rewarding.

#### Born through love

In most cases a child today is born through the intimacy of a husband and wife. The two have spent some time together developing their relationship before marriage so that at the time they are married they try to become one spiritually and can then become one physically.

That this happens has been determined by God. In this way the complete foundation for family development is established.

#### The first marriage

In one sense the first marriage was not one of love between a man and a woman although the reason for the union is clearly given in Scripture. God determined to make man in His own image (Genesis 1:26) and He made a woman as a companion for the man.

'This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh' said Adam, and the Scripture continues

'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.' (Genesis 2:23,24)

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Right from the start God set down a principle for marriage - that the husband and wife should be a unit. That unity was created by God.

### The reason for this unity

Why should we place so much importance on this act of creation? There are many aspects of family life suggested in the Scriptures and we will look at some of these later on. The one that is of most importance here at the moment is that the union of Adam and Eve and the importance of marriage is a model of the great union between Christ and his church or ecclesia at Christ's return and the establishment of God's kingdom.

One of the great beauties of Scripture is the promise of eternal life. This promise is inextricably linked with the concept of a husband and wife. The Apostle Paul gives some detail of this in Ephesians chapter 5. In some advice to husbands and wives he states that the husband is head of the wife just as Christ is head of the ecclesia (v. 23). He very specifically compares the husband and wife relationship with Christ and his ecclesia - the believers. Later (v. 25) he states that husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the ecclesia and 'gave himself for her'. There is nothing more explicit or more loving than this! And he continues '... that he might present her to himself a glorious ecclesia.' Jesus gave the ultimate for his family - his followers - his life.

By the way, while ultimately the concept is that the husband is the head of the wife, this does not imply dictatorial actions and behaviour. Equally, the husband needs to love and nurture his wife - even to the extent, if we follow Christ's example, of laying down his life for his wife. Far from being some kind of supremacy, what is indicated is an ultimate love of the husband for the wife; a partnership.

He stresses the need for love - that husbands should love their wives (v.28) and that wives should love their husbands (v. 33). Paul even quotes Genesis in this passage. He states (v.30) 'For we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' 'This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the ecclesia.' (v.32)

The family basis, then, is the supreme love between a husband and wife, just as there is supreme love between Christ and his ecclesia.

But it goes further than this. One of Jesus' parables related to the story of the virgins waiting for the bridegroom to appear. They had to be ready and waiting for the bridegroom. Jesus will return to the earth and his bride will be waiting for him. And when he returns there will be a marriage. This is referred to in Revelation as the 'Marriage Supper of the Lamb'.

The ultimate reward is referred to in Revelation. The nineteenth chapter is about the time of the reward. When Christ returns he will meet his bride - she who has made herself ready for the husband so that the wedding can take place.

'Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.' (v. 7)

'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' (v.9).

And, of course, there are other most important reasons for marriage. We have mentioned the issue of companionship. There is also the importance of mutual support for wife and husband. The family pattern might also include the teamwork associated in raising children and of combined support in the service of God.

The one great foundation. This brings with it magnificent privileges and joy, and great responsibilities.

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### Transferring this to our family

The reason for going into this in such detail is simply that there is no greater foundation for the beginning of family life than that given in the Scriptures. The foundation of companionship was given in the beginning. The fact that it did not work out well at first is no reason to doubt its importance to us now. It is so vital that our families are based on the foundations of Scripture. Jesus made a commitment to his bride. It was based on supreme love. Ultimate love. Husbands and wives need to love one another totally - to the ultimate test if necessary. And through the ages, there have been many practical examples of wonderfully devoted couples where one has spent much time completely devoted to the other where the circumstances have needed this.

### Something to think about

- In what practical ways do you see yourselves in the devoted position where you will practically work with you husband/wife in a most loving situation?
- Give some examples of the positive, easier ways to demonstrate love.
- And now some when devoted love is just a tad more difficult!

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