

The Wonder of Family

Introduction:

Several weeks ago we spoke to the wonder of culture and had a great morning celebrating the excellent ways of culture represented here in Courts of Praise - Jesus ransomed “people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” The wonder of culture was seen in the beauty of our flags and in the delicious ethnic foods... Yum Yum...

Culture to some degree is represented by our values and vision with regards to what is excellent. The customary beliefs and values develop into social norms related to all aspects of life. We understand that all of the cultures represented here today have some good points and bad points. This morning we are going to look at the wonder of family which forms the basic foundation of culture. In other words, family comes before culture and therefore has pre-eminence or first place; when God created Adam and Eve he firstly introduced family and then as the family grew culture evolved.

Can anyone name the Seven Wonders of the World? From ancient to modern times people have sought out the Seven Wonders of the World. They are breath-taking wonders of God and man’s creating. In the same way that there are Seven Wonders of the World, I believe that from “in the beginning” of creation God created Adam and Eve and family and it was very good. This was the beginning of the wonder of family, and God’s original design was for our good. I believe that from a Christian perspective family is one of the greatest wonders of the world...

Family – God’s Household:

In the context of Scripture there are times the concept of family and household are mixed together; they are one in the same. In the Bible times families were only seen in the context of a household; mom’s and dad’s, children, grandparents and even extended family members. All of this constituted family. In Abraham’s family as an example there were probably about 10 to 20 people when they left for the Promised Land. But within a few short years the number is seen to have been 50 or more. I share this because in our western culture family is seen as a dad and mom (traditionally) and 2.4 children, so to speak. None-the-less, family is one of the wonders of creation and is meant to be experienced. The Bible clearly tells us in **Psalm 127 - 1Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. 2 It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. 3 Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. 5 Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.**

I like the way Eugene Peterson puts the opening verse in the Message – “If God doesn’t build the house, the builders only build shacks.” In other words, in order to have posterity as a family, we need God’s help. This is clearly seen in the following Psalm.

Psalm 128 – 1 Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. 2 You will eat the fruit of your labour; blessings and prosperity will be yours. 3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. 4 Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord. 5 May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, 6 and may you live to see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel.

One of the wonders of family is that of walking in the fear of the Lord, the ability to honour and respect God for who he is and what he can do. When families walk in the fear of God – that loving obedience – the results are full of blessings and prosperity; a fruitful wife... many sons and daughters... and you live to see your grandchildren. This is truly a wonder to experience. In **Deut 4:9-10** the responsibility was given to the parents to “make them known to your children and your children’s children” – all the ways of God.

The Family Tree:

In the Old Testament we see numerous genealogies presented and this theme of family carries on into the New Testament. **Matt 1:1** begins with “the family tree of Jesus Christ”. We see Jesus regularly involved in touching the lives of parents and children. One of the best known parables is found in **Luke 15:11** – the parable of the lost son where the father eagerly welcomes home his son into the family with the best robe, a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

In **Acts 16** we have Paul and Silas in prison praying and singing praises to God when a violent earthquake destroys the prison. The jailer woke up and fearing for his life drew his sword and was about to kill himself when Paul stops him and says we are all here. That night Paul preaches to the jailer and he and his whole family get saved.

The wonder of the family continues to be seen as the church meets in various households sharing food, fellowship and fun together as they learn and share about the kingdom of God. Paul actually gives a warning to Timothy in **1 Tim 5:8 - But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.**

The concept of the family tree is fascinating to explore as we discover long lost relatives. However the family tree can also reveal a few rotten branches. This is where the wonder of a Christian family can shine the brightest. One of the greatest opportunities for the Christian family is that of revealing the Love of God to a broken world. Many of us – Christian or not – have brokenness within our families and know people who are broken. There are many people in the church and outside the church who are lonely, disappointed with God, struggling through challenges and cravings, real people who are hurting. This gives the family of God the great privilege to share the wonder of family that we now enjoy.

In conclusion:

The question arises how do we share the wonder of God's family with a broken world?

This is but one of the numerous questions that confronts God's church family today. There are many times when people struggle with sin and brokenness only to be judged and condemned by the church. I have encountered such people who often say their non believing friends are more understanding than their church friends. This is not the way God's family is to be seen. The church is not to judge the broken but to continue the restorative ministry of Jesus Christ who wades into the world and its problems. We are to offer solutions to the hurt and pain by revealing the love, acceptance and forgiveness of God. There is must read for us all, a book by Jerry Cook called Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness.

One of the greatest wonders of the family of God is this – there is a place for the broken and the weary. In order for this to happen we all must be honest with ourselves. To some degree we are all broken and weary and have to become honest with one another. Then and only then can we experience the fullness of God's wonder in family.

Over the years as a pastor I have grown in many ways. When I first started out in ministry, Becky can attest to this, I was a black and white pastor who had no problem seeing and judging people's sin and problems. However, over the years of ministry I became aware that I too have sins and problems that I struggle with and God chooses to love me despite my stuff. A few weeks ago I spoke on the Love of God; he pardons our sins and pursues us in love. When we avoid his love he shows us his loving patience, not wanting to bring his disciplining love to bear on our lives. I have experienced God's love in these ways. Therefore I have become much more attentive to the Love of God not only in my life but as an expression through my life.

This is the wonder of God's family; the Love of God in action allowing there to be acceptance of sinners and the forgiveness that we along need and long for.