**Family Discipleship Class**

(much of the following material is adapted from the following books:

“*The Excellent Wife*” – by Martha Peace and, “*The Exemplary Husband*” – by Stuart Scott)

**Marriage and the Family are God’s Ideas**

 According to Genesis 1:26-28, the ideas of marriage and family originated with God!

Later God said that everything He created (including marriage) was “very good.” God knew His plan and was pleased with it.

 Genesis 1:31: *“And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”*

 1 man with 1 woman = “Very Good!”

In chapter 2, God goes back and explains the outworking of the man and woman coming together. Genesis 2:18: “Then the LORD God said, *‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I WILL MAKE him a helper suitable for him.’” (brought all animals before Adam to name …) Gen 2:21ff*

So from the very beginning, before God ever established nations or people groups, He established marriage and the family. This “order of priority” has some serious implications.

 - the family is the foundational unit of society; society must be built from the family up; - satan understands, destroy the family = destroy society; expect satan to attack the family

*Illustration:* **rope** represents God’s good design for the family (godly father, mother, children, seeking first the kingdom of God – Matthew 6:33)

satan wants to destroy the family ... starts pulling apart the strands ... (give me some examples)

(reject authority/ no respect/ no standards/ immorality/ divorce/ despise children/ feminism ...)

How have we got to the place where we are today, with God’s design for the family being weakened and pulled apart?

Dennis Rainey (ministry called FamilyLife) offers what he calls “***Leading Spiritual Indicators***” for why families are coming apart.

#1 **Our culture has lost the fear of God!**

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (like the days of Judges – everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes)

Fear of God is reverential awe and respect for the LORD, knowing that He is not only loving and compassionate, but holy and just as well. It is Psalm 139 ... knowing that He sees and knows everything there is to know about me. Therefore, I reverently bow my knee and heart before Him and willingly submit myself to obeying His authority over me as my maker and my God, and the one to whom I am ultimately accountable!

How can you know if you fear God in the realm of your family?

#2 **Our culture has abandoned Absolute Truth!**

John 8:31-32 says, “Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine;32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

The message coming across loud and clear in our culture today is that you are free to live any way you want. Tolerance for everyone’s ideas and opinions is the greatest virtue.

This approach is permeating much of professing Christianity ... (toleration of false doctrines)

**Psalm 1** //// Psalm 119:8-11

**#**3 **Our culture rejects the clear Biblical distinctions in male and female roles**

We’ll talk more about this in the weeks ahead, but the impact of feminism and the media’s agenda to mock and ridicule true masculinity and femininity has had devastating effects on the family. Women are being taught to at best tolerate children and at worst hate them. They are encouraged to mock and disrespect their husbands. And men are taught to be weak and to neglect their wife and children in order to pursue pleasure and entertainment. The result: discontentment, anger, abuse, fractured relationships, broken homes, and God’s plan for the family disregarded – even by many who say they are Christian. (today – it has expanded to the issue of gender)

#4 **Our culture despises Marriage and Children!**

Regarding marriage ... **delayed** ... **discouraged** (just live together) ... **divorced** numbers say 1:2

Genesis 1&2 ... marriage is a gift from God / Malachi 2:16 “For I hate divorce says the Lord ...”

Regarding children ... **abortion** (54,000,000 since Roe v Wade 1973 / in US (2010) 4.1 million live births vs. 1.2 million abortions ... in Canada (2010) ration is 30 abortions to every 100 live births!

**Number of children per family** ... Western & Asian cultures particularly effected ... China = one child per family policy ... Western Europe is at crisis point /// France has 1.5 children per family. While at same time huge influx of Muslim immigrants (who happen to average 6)

\*\*\* in two generations France will be a Muslim nation by sheer numbers alone!

How about Canada? ... what do you think the number of children per family is? 1.6!!!!

Why so few? Is there a government policy like China? No! So why? We live in a culture where people are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; despise children – they “cramp people’s style” / love prosperity and it costs a lot to raise children / don’t want the hassle; take too much time

It’s not only number of children, but **the care of children too**. There is a real issue of who is raising our children ... who is teaching them ... is it parents? *Grandparents? Government education programs? Is it the church? Who is responsible for the children; who is teaching them what God commands they be taught? Who is bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord? Who does the Bible say should be?*

This matter of not taking full responsibility for raising children *happens right in the home* in all too many cases. A lot of parents neglect their children by failing to provide them with spiritual guidance they need. The Word of God is rarely opened; talk about Christ is absent; there is no clear purpose being articulated for the family to be an instrument for the glory of God. Children need to know why the family exists and how they can be part of bringing honour to the LORD!

There is one more spiritual indicator ... this one is particularly for us who are believers in Christ

#5 **Many Christians feel powerless to change**

The task of consistently, daily, living for the glory of God in all aspects of our lives seems, to many, to be overwhelming. The Christian life is a constant battle against the culture, against our own flesh and our own pride and sin; it requires constant swimming upstream/ against the flow/ through rapids. Too many, are giving in or giving up.

Paul says in Philippians 4:13, “**I can do all things through Him who strengthens me**.” By God’s Spirit and through His Word we have every necessary thing to become more like Christ and do what He has called us to do.

Do you believe that?

Our prayer is that these materials will bless you and help answer the question: “how can our families be restored to God’s good design?”