

The importance of Family

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We have considered how our upbringing might affect our own family life. We all have ideas of what kind of family we want to create, so now looking forward we will take a look at what important aspects family can provide for a child and how we can do this.



Firstly to say, we recognise that families now can be quite diverse. Every family will bring its own unique characteristics and every family is different. But every family unit is highly important to the security and development of a child who belongs to it. It creates a strong foundation for the child to build on or good soil in which to grow and flourish.

A family has 4 purposes (according to N&S Lee, parenting course, adapted):

- 1) The family provides support: acceptance, love, comfort, protection, security, whatever happens the family is there for them.
- 2) The family provides fun: to enjoy one another, to have family time, to build strong relationships and a sense of belonging, to be creative, to learn
- 3) **The family provides a moral and spiritual compass: learning right and wrong choices, to think about others, share chores, team work, modelling good behaviour.**
- 4) The family provides a place where children learn how to relate to people: experiencing, observing and practising relationships.

A family provides a museum of memories or a 'memory bank' for your children, so that when they have hard times now or in the future as adults they can draw on the good times in their childhood to help get them through. (some mums keep a shoe box of memorable things for each child).

So, we will want to create a happy caring home environment with a loving atmosphere. A child receives his first and most important sense of self-worth and security from his parents. This especially develops in the early years. This hugely significant task to bring security is given to all parents.

If you are interested, as a Christian parent I am meant to try and model to them God's care and love and the value and worth he places on every child and every individual. God considers everyone significant. His love is unconditional. He longs for us to come to him and be accepted into his arms of love.

Within the family, a child needs to know from his parents that they are deeply loved and accepted however they behave ie unconditional love. It is one of the greatest needs of a child. We still have rules and consequences but we forgive and patiently train and let them know it is okay to mess up, we all make mistakes.

Acceptance and love gives them self-confidence, it enables them to be themselves and to make close relationships and to be open and real in these relationships. It gives them

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If your aim is to always give them pleasures or to make them happy all the time, that child is likely to believe his well-being and happiness is primary and all else is secondary.

You want to communicate to your child that you are there for them not that you're there only for them.

Sending a clear message of unconditional love but not ego-inflation!

There needs to be a balance of love and limits.

Feedback

So how can I ensure my child is family-centred and not self-centred?

Any ideas?

1. family rules that consider others
2. family chores and teamwork
3. teach them your needs for rest, quiet, hobbies
4. explain other's needs and making sacrifices eg visiting a relative for their pleasure
5. sharing, not being greedy even with parents
6. get them to take responsibility eg don't pick up their rubbish
7. you are not their servant
8. what is best for the whole family not just me
9. teach them the joy of serving and being kind, make it fun eg bake biscuits for neighbours
10. be careful about over sympathising their feelings, understand but still make them do what they are complaining about eg I know you don't want to stop playing with your toys, it is hard, then pause and wait next to them, then praise small steps of cooperation

A final thought

Therefore, as we near the end of today's session I would like to tell you a few things the Bible says, for encouragement.

Bible verses

Ephesians 3v14-15

'I bow my knees before the Father (God), from whom EVERY FAMILY in heaven and earth is named'

God created family and he created it to be a beautiful unit. No family is perfect but we can work to make them the best they can be, with much love and forgiveness. Which really is and is meant to be, an image of God (our Heavenly Father) being in relationship with us and forgiving us repeatedly when we ask him.

In the New Testament, the time when Jesus was on earth, the term family was not used so much, instead the term 'house' or 'household' was used. I love this, as it opens the door of one's own little family, to welcome others in, in fact anyone staying with you – friends, extended family, dependents, employees – a really inclusive picture of welcome and shelter-love it!