

Women's League Conference held at Caltenville

Theme :What is a family?

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We live in an ever downward-spiralling society, where the values so important to life have been lost to selfishness. The divorce rate- about 50% is staggering. Abortion is prevalent and over 1 million babies are aborted annually in the United States. Children openly rebel against parents and parents pay little attention to their children's lives.

1. Definitive meaning of a family

The noun family is derived from a Latin word: familiar. In human context, a family is a group of people affiliated by consanguinity, affinity, or co-residence.

An often used Western definition of a family is that it is fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children; two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another, and reside usually in the same dwelling place; all the members of a household under one roof; a group of persons sharing common ancestry; Lineage, especially distinguished lineage.

In most societies it is the principal institution for the socialization of children. Extended from the human "family unit" by biological-cultural affinity, marriage, economy, culture, tradition, honour, and friendship are concepts of family that are physical and metaphorical, or that grow increasingly inclusive extending to community, village, city, region, nationhood, global village and humanism. A family group consisting of a father, mother and their children is called a nuclear family. This term can be contrasted with an extended family.

There are also concepts of family that break with tradition within particular societies, or those that are transplanted via migration to flourish or else cease within their new societies. As a unit of socialization and a basic institution key to the structure of society, the family is the object of analysis for sociologists of the family. There are many ways in which families are an integral part of the health and well being of its members. There are also different sizes of families

and subsystems of families. How the family deals with illness depends on their cultural values as well as how they were brought up. The definition of a family depends on its size, and their interaction with each other. There are single parent families, same sex parent families, and extended families to include two or more generations in the same house. The definition of family can also be influenced by what part of the country you live in.

Different definitions of a family

1. *Family are people in your life who may be related to you by blood, marriage, or choice, often for a lifetime(yours and theirs), who you hold dear and would generally do anything to help them when needed including making personal sacrifices, and whom you generally agree to accept no matter what they do. They may be someone you see daily or infrequently but the bond remains, and stands the test of time, distance, and overrides almost any challenges.*
2. *Family: a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children. (from Online Dictionary).*
3. *Family: Two or more people who share goals, have long term commitments to one another, and reside usually in the same dwelling place. (oxford).*
4. *Family: a primary social group consisting of parents and their offspring, the principal function of which is provision for its members.(Sociology)*
5. *Family: people descended from a common ancestor. (thesaurus)*

2. Family and God

This part is based on a book by the late JC Ryle (1816-1900).

The words which form the title of this paper ought to always stir some feelings in our minds. There is not a man or woman on this earth who is not a member of some "family." The poorest as well as the richest has his relative and kin, and can tell you something of his "family."

We all know, that family gatherings at certain times of the year, such as Christmas, are very common. Thousands of homes are crowded then, if at no other time of the year. The young man in town snatches a few days away from business, and takes a run down to visit his parents at home. The young

woman gets a short holiday, and comes to visit her father and mother. Brothers and sisters meet for a few hours. Parents and children look one another in the face. There is so much to talk about! So many questions to be asked! So many interesting things to be told! It is indeed a happy home which sees "the whole family" gathered in it at Christmas.

Family gatherings are natural, and right, and good. They are one of the very pleasant things which has survived the fall of man. Next to the grace of God, I see no principle which unites people so much in this sinful world as family sentiments. Community of blood is a most powerful tie. People will stand up for their relatives, merely because they are their relatives, and refuse to hear a word against them, even when they have no sympathy with their tastes and ways. Anything which helps to keep up the family sentiment ought to be commended. It is a wise thing, when it can be done, to gather "the whole family" together at Christmas.

There is one great family to which we all should seek to belong to. It is a family despised by many, and not even known by some. But it is a family of far more importance than any family on earth. To belong to it entitles a man to far greater privileges than to be the son of a king. It is the family of which Paul speaks to the Ephesians, when he tells them of the "whole family in heaven and earth." It is the family of God.

The family before us consists of all real Christians; all who have the Holy Spirit living within them; all true believers in Christ; all the saints of every age, and Church, and nation, and language. It includes the blessed company of all faithful people. It is the same as the Elect of God; the household of faith; the mystical body of Christ; the bride; the living temple; the sheep that never perish; the Church of the firstborn; the holy universal Church. All these expressions are "the family of God" only using other names.

Membership in "the family of God," does not depend on any earthly connection. It does not come by natural birth, but by new birth. Ministers cannot impart it to their hearers. Parents cannot give it to their children. You may be born in the godliest family in the land, and enjoy the sweetest fellowship of grace that any Church can supply, and yet never belong to the family of God. True Christians are called "a family" because they all have one Father.

They are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. They are all born of one Spirit. They are all sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. They have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, "Abba Father." [Galatians 3:26; John 3:8; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Romans 8:15] They do not regard God with a cringing kind of fear, as they would to a harsh Being, that is always

ready to punish them. They look up to Him with tender confidence, as a reconciled and loving parent; as one forgiving evil and sin, to all who believe in Jesus; and full of pity even to the least and feeblest. The words, "Our Father in heaven," are no mere form of prayer in the mouth of true Christians. No wonder they are called God's "family."

True Christians are called "a family," because they all rejoice in one name. Just as a common family name is the uniting link to all the members of a clan, so does the name of Jesus tie all believers together in one vast family. As members of outward visible Churches they have various names and distinguishing classifications. As living members of Christ, they all, with one heart and mind, rejoice in one Savior. Every heart among them feels drawn to Jesus as the only object of hope. Every tongue among them would tell you that "Christ is all." Sweet to them all is the thought of Christ's death for them on the cross. Sweet is the thought of Christ's intercession for them at the right hand of God. Sweet is the thought of Christ's coming again to unite them to Himself in one glorified fellowship forever. In fact, you might as well take away the sun out of heaven, as take away the name of Christ from believers. To the world His Name may not mean much, but to believers, it is full of comfort, hope, rest, and peace. No wonder they are called "a family."

True Christians, above all, are called "a family" because there is so strong a family resemblance among them. They are all led by one Spirit, and are marked by the same general features of life, heart, taste, and character. Just as there is a general bodily resemblance among the brothers and sisters of a family, so there is a general spiritual resemblance among all the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. They all hate sin and love God. They all rest their hope of salvation on Christ, and have no confidence in themselves. They all endeavor to "come out and be separate" from the ways of the world, and to set their affections on things above. They all naturally turn to the same Bible, as the only food for their souls and the only sure guide in their pilgrimage toward heaven: they find it "a lamp to their feet and a light for their path." [Psalm 119:105] They all go to the same throne of grace in prayer, and find it as needful to speak to God as to breathe. They all live by the same rule, the Word of God, and strive to conform their daily life to its precepts. They all have the same inward experience. They all are, in varying degrees, acquainted with repentance, faith, hope, love, humility, and inward conflict. No wonder they are called "a family."

3. *Family and Socialisation*

Socialization is the primary means by which human infants begin to acquire the skills necessary to perform as a functioning member of their society, and

are the most influential learning processes one can experience. Although cultural variability is manifest in the actions, customs, and behaviors of whole social groups, the most fundamental expression of culture is found at the individual level. This expression can only occur after an individual has been socialized by its parents, family, extended family and extended social networks. This reflexive process of both learning and teaching is how cultural and social characteristics attain continuity.

Socialisation is a process that begins at birth and continues into adulthood. It is a process in which we learn how to become human and to behave in ways that are acceptable to others.

There are several contexts in which socialisation occurs, including that of schools, peers and the media, but here we seek to discuss socialisation as it occurs in the family.

For most children, families are responsible for the initial socialisation process. Families have a major and long lasting effect on children's lives. The home and the family is the first environment of learning for the child, where the acquisition of knowledge, competencies, attitudes and values first begins. The child learns many skills including language skills, social skills and emotional skills. Families are expected to care for and nurture children, financially provide for them and transmit cultural and moral values to them.

The child is actively involved in the socialisation process. Socialisation is a two-way interaction with each person influencing the other. Parents and children engage in reciprocal interaction, with children both responding to and eliciting behaviours. The family is not a closed system. Family practices reflect the values of the culture as a whole. Parents are likely to follow the role requirements for parents in their culture and also listen to advice from their own parents and friends. Families influence children's development in direct and indirect ways. Parents, siblings and extended family members can have an individual influence on children, but that influence is more than an individual one because it occurs in the context of the family.

I realise that I have not presented all the possible areas in this topic such as emotional development and genetics. This is due to limited time.

4. Role of a mother in a family

As times change, mothers change to meet the new roles that they are expected to play. Gone are the days where most mothers just cared for the family and the home. Mothers today are a lot of things to a lot of people. Mothers still have to fill the mother role, but it is not felt that they are the only ones responsible for rearing the family.

Mothers have always been ultimately responsible and expected to be the decision makers about child rearing, and matters pertaining to the house, in most cases. This is a role that has evolved with fathers accepting some of those responsibilities today. The reason I use most cases is because there are always exceptions to the rules, as there are with most things in life. There are some things that will never change and that is mom is still mom.

The changing role of mother today includes career issues, responsibility for total home care, education of children, healthy life styles for family, and there is more focus on mother as a person with needs of her own. This holds true for people living in larger cities than in small home towns. My mother would disagree with this assessment and I would disagree with her, that was unheard of in the past. You didn't disagree with mom on issues of life styles and how to care for the home. The problem with the role of mothers then and the role they now have, is the need to feel that they had to be all things to all people. Today mothers are not afraid to say what is on their mind whether someone will think they are not a good wife or mother.

Mothers are more career oriented. They know what they want to do with their lives and worked towards that goal, even with family. All family members are expected to do their part, including dads, in helping to make things work at home. The majority of today's mothers are expected to help with the financial aspect of family life and are out in the work force. For a lot of baby boomers, mothers worked, but it was not so much as a career choice as it was just to make ends meet financially. At that time tired mothers came home and were still expected to attend children's school functions, keep the house clean, cook meals and take care of any injuries or sick family members. Today mothers are taking more time for their self in a lot of different ways. Mothers are learning the importance of caring for self as well as others.

The changing role of mothers should not be seen as a bad change, but one that promotes healthy happier life styles for all family members. Mothers will always fill the role of mother, no matter how many changes in life occur. Families today are just realizing the importance of all the roles mothers have played in the past and how her role is changing for the better.

5. *Family and values*

Value is defined as the quality or worth of a thing. To combine the words together yields a definition of: a traditional set of social standards defined by the family and a history of customs that provide the emotional and physical basis for raising a family. Our social values are often times reinforced by our spiritual or religious beliefs and traditions.

Your family values definition consists of ideas passed down from generation to generation. It boils down to the philosophy of how you want to live your family life. Three traditional basic tasks in life have been described as work, play and love. There are many activities that fall under these categories that define our values. All of them are important and it takes work to balance these tasks. However, we often get caught up in work and other activities and neglect play and love. Often times we work hard because we are invested in our career goals, material things and financial rewards. Yet without a balanced life of incorporating play and having loving relationships, our lives become stressful, overwhelming and unsatisfying. Traditionally people define their values as stating that the family comes first, yet they find themselves with very little time or energy left over for spending time with the family.

Things such as how you view marriage and commitment, what role religion/spirituality plays in your family, how emotionally available you are to others, your beliefs about sharing responsibility, the common interests shared by your spouse and family, shared activities and hobbies, how family time is spent, how family decisions are made, common beliefs shared by you and your spouse regarding spirituality and religion, how family traditions are established, and so on. These are good topics to discuss at a family meeting to help determine how these things are valued. Often time assumptions are made about what another family member believes or values. Misunderstandings and miscommunications can happen because of these assumptions.

Traditional family values are usually passed on from one generation to the next, giving children the structure and boundaries in which to function and thrive. Family time, love, play and work give children this foundation. Take the time to share your family values and traditions with your children. Schedule family meetings together, share meals together where the family gets together to talk about the day, schedule recreation and relaxation into your day-to-day life. The definition of family values is the social standards defined by the family and a history of traditions that provide the emotional and physical basis for raising a family. Work together within your family to identify and create your own family values.

6. *Few beautiful and funny quotes on family*

I don't care how poor a man is; if he has family, he's rich. ~Dan Wilcox and Thad Mumford, "Identity Crisis," M*A*S*H

Rejoice with your family in the beautiful land of life! ~Albert Einstein

The family is a haven in a heartless world. ~Attributed to Christopher Lasch

The thing about family disasters is that you never have to wait long before the next one puts the previous one into perspective. ~Robert Brault, www.robertbrault.com

In some families, please is described as the magic word. In our house, however, it was sorry. ~Margaret Laurence

Family quarrels have a total bitterness unmatched by others. Yet it sometimes happens that they also have a kind of tang, a pleasantness beneath the unpleasantness, based on the tacit understanding that this is not for keeps; that any limb you climb out on will still be there later for you to climb back. ~Mignon McLaughlin, *The Neurotic's Notebook*, 1960

You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them. ~Desmond Tutu

The happiness of the domestic fireside is the first boon of Heaven; and it is well it is so, since it is that which is the lot of the mass of mankind. ~Thomas Jefferson, 1813

Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one. ~Jane Howard

"A Happy Family Is But An Earlier Heaven"

Author: John Bowring

"Family faces are magic mirrors. Looking at the people who belong to us we see the past, the present, and the future"

Author: Gail Lumet Buckley

"Family means putting your arms around each other and being there".

Author: Unknown

There is no cure for laziness but a large family helps. ~Herbert Prochnov

Our most basic instinct is not for survival but for family. Most of us would give our own life for the survival of a family member, yet we lead our daily life too often as if we take our family for granted. ~Paul Pearshall

The happiest moments of my life have been the few which I have passed at home in the bosom of my family. ~Thomas Jefferson

And thank you for a house full of people I love. Amen. ~Terri Guillemets

The great gift of family life is to be intimately acquainted with people you might never even introduce yourself to, had life not done it for you. ~Kendall Hailey, The Day I Became an Autodidact

In time of test, family is best. ~Burmese Proverb

Family is just accident.... They don't mean to get on your nerves. They don't even mean to be your family, they just are. ~Marsha Norman

The only rock I know that stays steady, the only institution I know that works is the family. ~Lee Iacocca

Poem about family

Those with a loving family are wealthier than those with much money.

Riches

By Jeanne D. Rhein

They say that times were tough then

That money was very tight

But I remember my childhood

And I know that can't be right

Mom would cook our dinner

Dad came home at five

We were all sitting at the table

Waiting for him to arrive

We wouldn't eat from a microwave

Or a restaurant down the street

We all ate Mom's home cooking

And boy that can't be beat

We didn't eat in front of the T V

Or with a phone in our hand

We weren't plugged into a stereo

Bopping to the latest band

We would sit at the table

Everyone in their place

There were never any surprises

We recognized every face

Brothers to the left

Sisters to the right

That's the way we ate dinner

Every single night

We laughed we joked we talked we ate

We were a family don't you see

Though some may have been raised poor

You can see it wasn't me

So when you talk of family life

Or how it used to be

Though many had more money

None were rich as me.