

What is a True Friend?

Families in Trouble

A lady named Rith lived in one of the countries in Southeast Asia. Her husband was a soldier and his salary was very small. Rith had to work extremely hard each day in order to have enough food to feed her many children. She worried constantly and grew more and more angry. She would yell at her husband for his inability to get a better-paying job. She would scream at the children, telling them they were stupid and lazy for not helping her more. The children in turn became quarrelsome and unkind to each other. The neighbors were often bothered by the noise and the mean spirit of the entire family.

Rith could see no way out of her problem. She grew more and more desperate. Finally she found an old hand grenade. When the entire family was together, she pulled the pin and they were all killed.

This sad story shows just how horrible a family can become. Many families all around us are struggling with their own problems. Their problems may not be as serious as Rith's family, but daily we hear of families breaking up through divorce. Though divorce does not kill like a hand grenade, it blows apart the family and injures each person, especially the children.

Arguments in families arise over many things.

Money

In-laws

Child-raising

How the husband spends his time

Etc.!

Truly, when we think about the many problems there can be in a family, we would agree with the ancient scriptures that says, "Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife" Proverbs 17:1.

Sometimes we think we would be better off without our family. Is it true? Would it be better to leave our families and live alone? Perhaps the answer can be seen in an illustration about a boat. A boat is a very dangerous thing if the people inside keep standing up and moving about without any cooperation or leadership. They can easily capsize the boat and drown everyone. At the same time a boat can be very useful for transportation and business. If there is a flood, a boat can save the entire family.

The family is like the boat. If people are arguing and fighting, it can be very miserable and dangerous. But life around us is like a flood. There are many problems in the world. It is difficult to live life alone. The family can be a boat that saves us, if we learn how to work together and have a peaceful and happy family.

What is the wisdom that we need to have such a family? Explore the four ideas in this lesson to see if they will help your family be happier and more peaceful. Don't jump out of the boat! Find a way to steer your family well. If you are single, consider the benefits of the family and the steps towards having a good one.

Step One: Focus on the Benefits of the Family

Close to three thousand years ago a wise king named Solomon said, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” Ecclesiastes 4:9,10,12.

When the husband is sick, isn't it good to have a wife to take care of him? When the parents are old, isn't it a wonderful blessing to have faithful children watch over them? Most of us have received enormous benefits from being a part of our family. We've eaten food our father earned and our mother cooked. We've had older brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles look after us and teach us many things.

We must not forget these things. If we will take our eyes off of our family's problems and focus them on the benefits, it will give us new courage and joy.

Perhaps right now you are frustrated with one member of the family. Make a list of every good thing he or she has ever done. Even if your list is small, focus on these things and you will see some of the problems disappear.

The family is the moral strength of the community. When a mother cares for her child with love and kindness, she is preparing her child to be a helpful and kind person in the world. When a father is committed to his wife and faithful in providing food for his family, his children watch and learn to do the same. This is like the Khmer proverb, “The leaf does not fall far from the trunk.”

Even the animals recognize the great importance of the family. Without the family the species would die out. Some animals such as eagles demonstrate faithfulness to their mate and

committed care for their children. Children and grandchildren also bring great joy to the family. Cambodians often say, “We love our child one bucket-full and our grandchild one barrel-full.” This shows the great joy that a family can bring.

The ancient story about the very first human family gives insight into the benefits of the family. The story says that the God called the Father of Life created the first man. His name was Adam. As Adam looked around he saw that each animal had a mate. There was none for him. Had this mighty, all-knowing God forgotten something? No. He wanted Adam to feel the difference between being alone and being married.

The story goes on to say that God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” Genesis 2:18. God created a beautiful woman who is known as Eve. He brought her to Adam to be each other's companions and helpers. Then God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” Genesis 1:28. Ancient scriptures in various parts of the world speak of this couple as the father and mother of all people. They were created to live in perfect peace and harmony. The scriptures say that during that time there was no sin, no fighting, no divorce or hatred.

If this kind, compassionate and powerful God created the family, then surely He intended it to be a great blessing to each of us. If we will focus on these benefits and praise and encourage the good qualities in our families, we will have taken the first important step to receiving the great benefits God intends to give us.

Step Two: Turn Away from Selfishness

There was a foolish girl named Kmw who lived in a city with her six brothers and sisters. Her parents were quite poor, but

they did own a house. One day they decided to sell the house, buy a smaller home and use the rest of the money to help their seven children start businesses. While the mother slept her first night in the new house, Kmw sneaked in and stole the money from under her mother's pillow. She ran away to share the money with her boyfriend. She thought she would have a great time by keeping all the money for herself. But her boyfriend had the same idea and stole it all from her! She was horrified. She lost all the money and lost her family too.

We can see clearly from this story that selfishness is the greatest cause of problems in families. Husbands often think of their own pleasure rather than the joy and health of their wives and children. Parents sometimes force their children into a marriage or job that the child does not want. They pretend they are seeking their children's best, but really they are only thinking of their own advantage. This often leads to the children and their parents suffering much unhappiness.

If we know the problem is selfishness, let us turn away from it and begin to solve our family's problems. A baby quickly learns not to touch a hot stove. Let us realize that selfishness pleases us only for a moment and then causes burning pain.

We can also learn this lesson from the story of Adam and Eve. The Bible says there was no sin or suffering in the world when God created it. Everything was perfect with no death or pain. The story goes on to tell us that Satan, an evil spirit who hated God came to tempt Adam and Eve. He wanted to destroy the happiness of families made marriage to be a blessing. God intended Adam and Eve to have children and grandchildren and fill the earth with peaceful, harmonious families.

But Eve and then Adam chose to selfishly reject the Father of Life and His plan for happiness. They disobeyed. Immediate-

ly things began to change in their hearts. God came and talked to them "Why did you sin and eat from Satan's hands?" Adam blamed Eve. The harmony was broken and sin began to take over the world. The whole earth was affected and decay, death and impermanence took over. Their sorrow was turned to joy when they had two baby sons. They named the first one Cain and the second one they called Abel. Their joy was short-lived. When the boys grew up, a fight started and Cain in his anger murdered his brother Abel. How deeply Adam and Eve regretted their sin against God. They saw clearly that they must turn away from selfishness if they would ever have peace and happiness again.

Step Three: Follow God's Counsel

In Cambodia during the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom's and bride's hands are tied together by red cords. Family members come and help tie the knots. These cords are a symbol of their commitment to each other. Everyone wants to see them succeed. They know that the husband and wife must choose to daily keep their commitment strong.

If you want your family to stay together and be a place of happiness you must find ways to keep the commitment strong. Who can help you daily tie more cords of love that will keep you all together in harmony and helpfulness? The God who made Adam and Eve is the God who has given the scriptures to you. In the Bible there are many proverbs and ideas that can help your family. Read them often and gain strength from them.

Here are a few red cords of God's counsel:

"Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies" Ephesians 5:28. No wise person mistreats his own body, so

we must also carefully and tenderly care for each other. Do to each other as you hope the other one will do to you.

“A gentle tongue breaks a bone.” “A soft answer turns away wrath” Proverbs 25:15; 15:1. Even when the other speaks harshly respond kindly.

“Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” Colossians 3:19-20.

Step Four: Ask God for Help

All of the above counsel is good, but many people simply feel they can't do it. They have tried to solve their problems, but the problems just continue. Many finally give up on the family and leave. They feel like a battery that has lost all of its charge. Where can people get recharged in the area of love and commitment?

When Adam and Eve sinned, He did not desert them. He promised to help them if they would ask Him. God has power to change hearts, to bring peace where there is arguing, and love where there is hatred.

There was a man named Sambat who got angry with his wife every day. One day he went to get his key from where he always kept it. It was not there. His wife had hid it somewhere else. When he asked his wife where the key was, she said she didn't know. They argued until it became a big problem. He hit her and she ran outside. In his anger he locked the door. She stayed out with her children for the whole night. She worried so much about what would happen to her life. She had many children and now wondered what would happen if her husband decided to leave her?

Her husband left just as she feared. The next day her husband put all his things in a small suitcase and ran away to another city. He did not want to be with his wife anymore. He wanted to be free of all responsibility to his children and just take care of himself. But after awhile he felt sad. He knew he had done wrong to his family. He had learned about the Creator God and knew that God intended for him to remain loyal to his wife and children. So he returned to the city and when he saw his wife he actually told her that he was sorry for what he had done. He called his family together and said, “We must pray to the Creator God and ask him to make me become loving and kind. We must live to make each other happy and not be selfish.”

His wife was very surprised that he had come back and even more surprised that he said he was sorry. She was still angry in her heart but did not show it to him. But as she saw that God was changing her husband's heart to be gentle, she began to forgive him.

They opened the scriptures to read God's wisdom for their family. They read a text which said, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body” (Ephesians 4:31,32,25). Together they asked God to take away their selfishness and to help them be a loyal and loving family who would live to help each other. They found that God cares and He always answers this kind of request.

The problems in our families can seem impossible to solve. It can seem very hard to ever have a heart that is compassionate and unselfish. But as we see in the story, it is possible with God. Why not try asking God and see what He will do for

your family.

What about you? Caring for your family is like living in a house which has a hole in the roof. When it rains, would you run away from your house? No! You would repair it by looking for the leak and then bringing thatch, tile or anything in order to stop the leak. What about your family? In the same way it really deserves to have you find some way to fix it, to make it a family full of peace.

Right now you can choose to begin with these four steps. Start by saying a prayer to God something like this:

“Dear Father of Life. You created the family to bless us. Please give me compassion and strength to be committed to solving my family problems. Please bring peace to my home. Help me focus on the good qualities of those in my family. Take away my selfishness and give me power to be kind even when others aren’t. Thank You for Your help. Amen.”

Believe He has heard you and act on these steps starting today.

Points to Remember

* Before planting rice, look at the weeds in the field. Before giving your child to someone in marriage, look at their relatives carefully.

* The family with peace is the desire of all people.

* The family is the boat in the middle of the water. You must hold the steering wheel very carefully.

* Quickly fix the house that is broken. Quickly fix the problems in the family.

The best advice for the family is to be faithful, truthful, help-

ful, forgiving and to treat one another as you would treat your own body.

Proverbs 17:1 “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.”

Questions

Please underline the sentences that are correct.

Confusion is only in the families that are selfish.

The breaking up of families makes children good people.

If you have problems in our family, you must try to fix them.

Write “T” before the sentences that are true and “F” before those that are false.

The family has peace through the wife.

The man has the right to find another woman besides his wife but the wife doesn’t have the right to find another man.

Husbands and wives should love each other.

Circle the letter before the sentences that are correct.

What are the necessities of a family?

Possessions

Love

Forgiveness

Children

Write three ideas that you think will make your family happy.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Why is it important to have a loyal, helping family?

What is the main cause of problems in the family?

Do you see selfishness in your own home that if removed would bring happiness?

What are the names of the first man and woman that God created?

What does it mean to become one flesh as a married couple?

- A.
- B.
- C.

What does the story of Adam and Eve's first sin teach us about our problems with sin?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

F.

7. Would you like God to help your family be filled with love?

8. If this statement is true of your choice today check it:

_____ I want to have a peaceful family. I will act upon the good advice in this lesson.