

HOW PREACHING CAN STRENGTHEN FAMILIES

PREACHING AS COUNSELING:

While "psychologizing" in the name of Christ is not a good substitute for Biblical preaching, there is an aspect of preaching that serves the same purpose as counseling. Notice the following important characteristics of counseling:

1. It is an engagement between people.
2. It is calculated to be a "helpful" engagement.
3. It is a means of communication.
4. It is an area in which problems are defined, and possible solutions are explored.
5. In the process, research findings, the experiences of others, objective evaluation, a search for wisdom, a search for truth, and a search for realistic solutions are all involved.
6. While the counselor is in a helping relationship, he cannot do for the clients what they must do for themselves. The basic responsibility for insight, acceptance of responsibility, and the initiating of constructive change remains with the clients.
7. In the course of the counseling procedure, the counselor serves much the same purpose of a coach in an athletic contest. He is there to critique the way the execution of the game reflects an understanding of the basic issues of the game, to commend the good plays made by the athletes, and to give guidance as to ways in which their execution of the game may be improved.

THE STRENGTHENING OF FAMILIES IS WITHIN THE SUBJECT AREAS OF MAJOR CONCERN IN BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS:

1. The family is the basic social unit. It is the social unit upon which the successful operation of all other social entities rest, whether these be friendship groups, task groups, communities, nations, or the church (see Psl. 11:3).

2. The 4th, 7th, and 10 commandments of the Law of Moses in the Old Testament all related to the wellbeing of the family. In addition, there were teachings related to incest, abortion, homosexuality, sex with relatives, sex with animals, conjugal rights and responsibilities, inheritance laws, addiction, and roles within the family.
3. Today, much emphasis is given to the telling of the "story" as a prime component of preaching. "Deductive" aspects of the story are much like the "discovery" elements in counseling.
4. Note how the rich "stories" from the Old Testament lend themselves to objective lessons about the home and its function. Try your hand at pinpointing important teachings about families in the following stories:
 - a. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his family, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Isaac and Esau/Rebekah and Jacob, Jacob and Leah/Rachel, Joseph and his brothers, Samson and Delilah, Hannah and Elkanah, David and Bathsheba, David and his children, etc.
5. Note how the subject matter of the New Testament regarding family lends itself to rich object lessons about the family and its function:
 - a. Zacharius and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Jesus' relationship to His mother and to His brothers, James' and John's relationship to their mother, Ananias and Sapphira, Aquila and Priscilla, Timothy and Eunice/Lois, etc.
6. In addition, the New Testament is replete with references as to the way families should function. As an example, just notice these passages from the Sermon on the Mount: Matt. 5:2-9, 22-24, 27-28, 31-33; 6:14-15, 19-21, 24-34; 7:1-5, 7-8, 9-12, 17-20, 24-27.

SUBJECT AREAS RELATING TO THE FAMILY WHICH SHOULD BE FREQUENTLY COVERED IN SERMONS TO THE CONGREGATION:

1. A Biblical view of marriage as ordained by God.
2. Marriage as the only Biblically sanctioned means of full sexual expression.
3. Preparation for marriage.

4. Family roles according to Biblical teaching.
5. The nature and place of agape-love in the family.
6. Duties, responsibilities and rights of family members.
7. The place of Biblical teaching, spiritual guidance and worship in families.
8. Family discipline.
9. Training for maturity.
10. Dispute resolution.
11. The permanence of marriage according to Biblical teaching.
12. The family as an evangelistic center.
13. The family as a hospitality center.
14. The family as an educational center.
15. Preparing the family for the difficult/challenging aspects of life: crises, failures, economic problems, persecution, tragedies, sickness, death.....

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