

# Marriage & Family

## Damaging Influences on the Home

### I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. There is no doubt but that American families today have a multitude of damaging influences.
- B. Some of the problems: (1)
  - 1. Today, there is more “family diversity”: Few adults are married, more are divorced or remaining single, and more are living together outside of marriage or living alone.
  - 2. Today, more children are born out-of-wedlock (now almost four out of ten), and more are living in stepfamilies, with cohabiting but unmarried adults, or with a single parent.
  - 3. Between the mid 1990s and the early 2000s, the marriage rate dropped 24 percent in the United States, and in the same period nonmarital cohabitation climbed 49 percent in the United States. It is estimated that about a quarter of unmarried women age 25 to 39 are currently living with a partner and an additional quarter have lived with a partner at some time in the past.
  - 4. There is a widespread acceptance by teenagers of nonmarital lifestyles.
    - a. A survey was given which asked for agreement with this position: “that most people will have fuller and happier lives if they choose legal marriage rather than staying single or just living with someone.” Less than a third of the girls and more than a third of the boys seem to believe that marriage is more beneficial to individuals than the alternatives.
    - b. More than 50 percent of teenagers now accept out-of-wedlock childbearing as a “worthwhile lifestyle.”
    - c. Over half of teenagers believe it is acceptable for a couple to live together before they get married.
- C. Why have these attitudes developed? Where are teens getting such ideas?

### II. SIN NEGATIVELY AFFECTS FAMILIES.

- A. Every single problem in every single family has the root cause of sin.
1. I will readily admit that this is quite simplistic, but it is true, nonetheless.
  2. Sin has a serious effect on mankind:
    - a. When Adam and Eve sinned, human relationships were forever changed: Gn 3:16-24.
    - b. Paul compiles numerous OT references and writes: “What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.’ ‘Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.’ ‘The poison of vipers is on their lips.’ ‘Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.’ ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.’ ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes’” (Rm 3:9-18).
- B. Let’s think about some families which were adversely affected because of sin:
1. Sara brought much heartache to her family because she refused to trust God.
    - a. God had promised to make Abraham a great nation:
      - “I will make you a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gn 12:2-3).
      - “The word of the LORD came to him [Abraham]: ‘This man [Eliezer of Damascus, Abram’s heir at the time] will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.’ He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be’” (Gn 15:4-5).

b. Sarai, Abram's wife, had a hard time trusting God to deliver on that promise: "Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, 'The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.' Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived" (Gn 16:1-4).

- It was widely believed in Abram's day that if a wife was barren, God was punishing you.
- The giving of a maidservant to a husband for the purpose of procreation was a widespread practice in Sarai's day. Thus, what Abraham was doing here was not at all considered adultery.
- Hagar apparently did not have the fertility issues Sarai had, and she conceived.

c. As soon as Hagar became pregnant, however, Sarai became quite upset with her: "When she [Sarai] knew she [Hagar] was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, 'You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me'" (Gn 16:4-5).

- Sarai then began to mistreat Hagar to the point that Hagar fled from her (16:6).
- As Hagar was running, an angel of the LORD appeared to her and said: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers" (16:11-12).

2. Because sin is the root cause of all family problems, there is often "baggage" which is carried from generation to generation.

a. In other words, because children learn sinful ways of behaving in a household, they often repeat those sinful behaviors in adulthood.

- b. There are a multitude of examples in the Scriptures.
- Abraham apparently passed on lying to his son Isaac.
    - Gn 12:10-20.
    - Gn 26:1-16.
    - Granted, the episode with Abram's going down to Egypt occurred before Isaac was ever born; however, it could very well be that Abram had a real problem with telling the truth—in Gn 20, he told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, not his wife.
  - Isaac and Rachel's favoritism caused Jacob much heartache in later life.
    - "Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gn 25:28).
    - Jacob was able to steal Esau's blessing through the conniving of his mother—that act brought much heartache to that family (Gn 27).
    - Jacob continued that favoritism in his own family: "Now Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him" (Gn 37:3-4).
    - Because of the jealousy of Joseph's brothers, Joseph was sold to slavery in Egypt. (Did Jacob pass on deception to his children, deception in learned in his family of origin?) Jacob mourned greatly when he thought Joseph had died: "Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. 'No,' he said, 'in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.' So his father wept for him" (Gn 37:34-35).

- Eli was a very poor example of fathering to the young Samuel.
  - Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were very evil men: 1 Sm 2:12-25.
  - Obviously there comes a time when a father cannot be held responsible for the sins of his children.
    - “The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him” (Ez 18:20).
    - This speaks of the personal responsibility we have for sin.
      - i. We cannot simply blame our failures and mistakes upon the previous generation.
      - ii. Jesus says: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin” (Jn 15:22).
    - Hophni and Phineas turned out to be so evil, however, because of the way their father treated them: “I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons make themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them” (1 Sm 3:12-13).
  - “When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice” (1 Sm 8:1-3).

- When God revealed himself to Moses, he said, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punished the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation” (Ex 34:6-7). Could the reason the Lord punishes children to the third and fourth generation be that sins are passed down from generation to generation?

---

1. The National Marriage Project, “The State of our Unions 2007,” (Rutgers University), 6-12.

---

**Church of Christ Sermons Online: Copyright © Dr. Justin Imel**