

THE FAMILY IN FOCUS

An Endangered Species

Episode I

By Pastor Mark Hughes

Men's first priority - our jobs

Women's first priority - our children

When we look at our world today, we see that we are much more conscious of losing vital species than we were years ago. The dodo bird was wiped out after the 16th century but many other species were also wiped out on the same island

From 1900-1960 we only lost 64 species. Since that time we have only lost 4 species

There is one species that we are not doing a good job at protecting. It is in fact a group within our species called the family

Three pillars of our society are **democracy – the church – the family** which really holds up our western civilization. If any of these gets destroyed or corrupted we are in trouble.

In 1900 - 1 in 100 ended in divorce

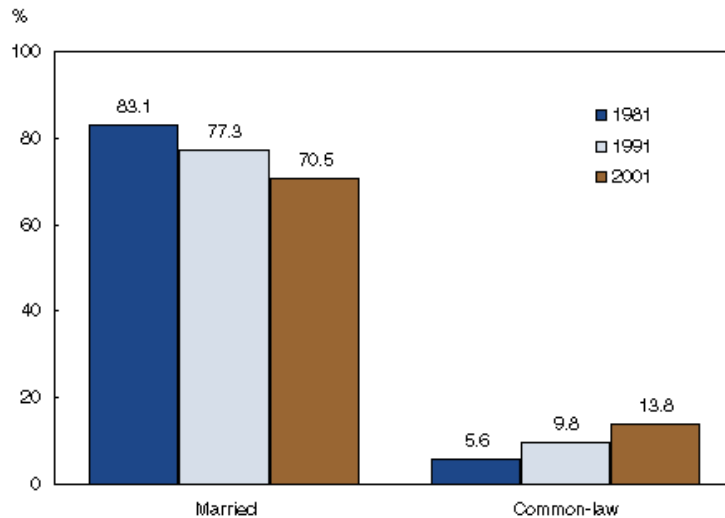
In 1925 - 1 in 25 ended in divorce

In 1950 - 1 in 7 ended in divorce

In 1975 - 1 in 2 (50 %) ended in divorce



It is not that we are improving or levelling out. People just aren't getting married as often. Common-law relationships are on the rise.



2.6 % of children were being raised in single parent homes in North America 1970
 7.0 % of children were being raised in single parent homes in North America in 1980
 19.2 % of children were being raised in single parent homes in North America 1990
 30.9 % of children were being raised in single parent homes in North America 2002;
 (Note: Hispanic is 46.7%; Black is 63.0 %)

We have moved from Ozzy and Harriet Nelson (1952) to Ozzy & Sharon Osbourne (2002)

One way of remembering what we need to combat the problem can come in the form of an acrostic. **PDQ** not **Pretty Darn Quick**

In the 1800's we almost wiped out the American Bison. They were down to 1000. Now there are 150,000 in North America. It is because they acted quickly to solve the problem. We can turn the tide of the systematic destruction of the family unit by implementing **PDQ**

1. Priorities (Ephesians 5:33-6:5). Our main priority is God. Our next priority is our spouse and then our children; then our older children need to respect their parents. At the end is our job (relationship with our boss and fellow workers). We have turned this completely around in our society. We have tried to accomplish everything by multitasking. But who do we think we're kidding. **We need to focus on the priority of our family.** We still need to do all the tasks but prioritize what is the most important. **If we have chosen to be a spouse and a parent we had better make that our primary responsibility. Your Priority is recognized by where you put your time and energy.**

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Episode II

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There is superficial relationship; aggravated relationship and there is meaningful relationship

2. Discipline - It isn't about punishment. It is rather setting parameters and boundaries for our kids to live in. God gave us 10 Commandments as boundaries to live within.

Our nation has laid aside these boundaries and we now have an all time high of . . .

Teenage suicide
Teenage pregnancy
Sexually transmitted diseases
Drug & alcohol abuse

“He who spares the rod hates his son but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.”

Proverbs 13:24

“The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother”

Proverbs 29:15

Life Principle: Punish bad behaviour; reward good behaviour

“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”

Proverbs 22:15

You are not trying to crush their spirit but you are trying to do is break the spirit of rebellion in them. Does anyone else enjoy your children? Discipline is not control or manipulation. It is setting out parameters so that they know right from wrong. **True discipline allows for creativity so they can become who they were meant to be.** Children need to be trained to become self-disciplined.

3. Quality of Time

Quality time is time spent that produces a meaningful relationship. We don't want to become "*ships that pass in the night.*"

There is superficial relationship; aggravated relationship and there is meaningful relationship according to Dr. Gary Smalley. The only way to get from superficial relationship to meaningful relationship is through aggravated relationship.

The best way to get an aggravated relationship is through camping. There is something about taking road trips together (rubbing shoulders, being together; eating together). It takes time to build a meaningful relationship. This kind of relation is gained through attending their games or being involved in their decisions. They don't have kids living in the room upstairs with their DVD, computer, walkman, gadgets and phone. Some don't have the foggiest idea what their kids are doing.

Is your marriage going to survive your children? Eventually they will move out. If you haven't made your spouse your priority, you will have no relationship left once the kids are removed from your relationship. This is when most marriages fail.

The way to avoid that problem is to get away at least once a week without the kids for a date. What about having a holiday once a year without the kids. They will be there when you get back.

You've got to keep the lines of communication and romance in your marriage. Never go to bed angry.

Summary: Human behaviour is learned behaviour. We have to learn to be parents. It's never too late. Nothing is too big for God. He is able to turn it around.

"He (the prophet Elijah or one with his type of spirit) will turn to hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I (the LORD Almighty) will come and strike the land with a curse."

Malachi 4:5

THE FAMILY IN FOCUS

Confessions of a Hopeless Romantic

Episode III

By Pastor Mark Hughes

5 Foundations of Successful Marriages

1. Christ
2. Communication
3. Consideration
4. Compromise
5. Commitment

Text: Philippians 2:1-5

We had better marry the right person. We are better off not marrying than marrying the wrong person. The biblical story of Jacob brings out this point. He actually married four wives.

1. Christ

From the beginning of time God instituted marriage. It was God who said,

“It is not good for man to be alone”

Genesis 2:18

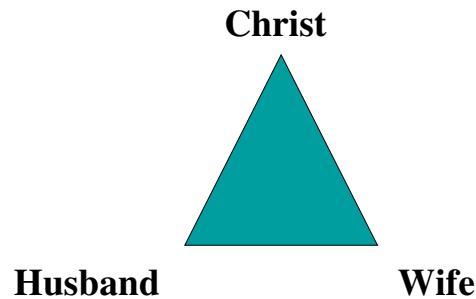
There is nothing wrong with being single if you were called to be single. If you would rather be marriage than to be single then you are not called to be single.

“He who finds a wife, finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.”

Proverbs 18:22

You want to find a good thing! The initial foundation for a successful marriage is Christ. Both the husband and wife need to be anchored in Christ (II Corinthians 6:14). Those who are unequally yoked together with an unbeliever should do their best to make it work. You can spare a lifetime of grief by not getting married to an unbeliever. It's much more easy to pull someone down than to drag someone up.

Godly women want a godly man; a man that can communicate; a man that has a job. If you want to become “marryable” turn yourself into the godly man that godly women are wanting. The centrality of Christ is absolutely essential for the success of a Christian marriage.



2. Communication

If you can learn to communicate in your marriage, you can pretty much overcome any circumstance that comes your way. Men are actually more open than women if you know how to crack them open. All you have to do is get them to talk about their favourite subject - themselves. Men are a little bit self-centred.

“Each of you should not look only to you own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Philippians 2:4

If you are a woman, it may be to your advantage to take an interest in his interests.

Conversations go from . . .

Small Talk
Serious Talk
Self Talk
Soul Talk
Sweet Talk

Relationships must move beyond the superficial, sexual, sensual thing that Hollywood is presenting. It has got to move to a new depth and a new understanding. We’ve got to look at what is on the inside and not on the outside. At the end of the day the physical thing won’t work. The physical thing will not cause a relationship to last.

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Confessions of a Hopeless Romantic

Episode IV

By Pastor Mark Hughes

5 Foundations of Successful Marriages

1. Christ
2. Communication
3. Consideration
4. Compromise
5. Commitment

Text: Philippians 2:1-5

3. Consideration

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.”

Philippians 2:3

Looking out not for your own interests but for the interest of others. Marriage is not “*give and take.*” The Biblical mandate is “*give and give.*” When people want things their way and they’re not considering the needs of the other it will ruin a relationship. When you give to the other person, they’ll give back. It’s not what you get out of it but rather what you give into it and, what you get out of it will be based upon what you give into it.

Remember the “*toilet seat theory.*” It is symptomatic. A relationship requires people to think about the other person. Remember the daily rose that Jack Benny made sure his wife received until the day of her death (seven years after his death).

Dr. Phil says that if a man wants to get to the heart of a woman he needs to do something around the house without being asked - something unexpected.

4. Compromise

If you don't compromise on anything, you are probably destined for failure. You cannot always have it your own way. When you fail to compromise, nobody wins. In a relationship if everyone wants their own way, if everybody stands their own ground, then there are always casualties. You've got to be able to find some common ground.

“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?”

Amos 3:2

In a lot of relationships they can't agree on anything. They can't agree on priorities. They can't agree on how to raise the kids. They can't agree on their finances. They can't agree on where to live.

As time goes by and we mature together our preferences actually come closer together. The compromises are not as significant as they once were.

5. Commitment

Remember the vows of a marriage *“for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.”* There is hardly a relationship that doesn't go through the bad times as well as the good times. The commitment of marriage is that we are going to stick it through no matter what happens. This is the only way to turn the tide in our culture.

“It is not your love that will sustain your marriage, but it is your marriage that will sustain your love.”

[Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#)

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”

Genesis 2:24

God creates a miracle at the altar. It is the joining of that miraculous commitment and the centrality of Christ that will make you succeed through thick and thin. The thing that will cause you and allow you to overcome all the struggles of life (and you will have struggles) is when you draw on the miracle of God. If God is for you (on your side) who can be against you (Romans 8:31)?

THE FAMILY IN FOCUS

The ABC's of Not-So-Basic Parenting

Episode V

By Pastor Mark Hughes

There is nothing basic about parenting. Parenting has become much more difficult because we have lots more to compete with than we did before (TV, Internet, video games).

There is developing in our world a global youth culture which has been called "*The Tribalization of Youth*." With every tribe there is always a certain language, dress, music, values and there are tribal identifying marks. There is an incredible trend toward tattooing and piercing today. 49% of those 18-29 year olds already have a tattoo. In the 70's we had long hair as our identifying mark.

Parents seem to be more and more losing their grip on their children especially when they become teenagers. Parents lose their abilities and confidence and they don't know where they went wrong. Parents find themselves turning into the roll of the cook, chauffer and cleaning lady. They feel like they've lost their grip on the whole concept of parenting.

Text: I Samuel 2:22-25

The Scripture blames Eli for the behaviour of his kids (I Samuel 2:13-17; 3:13). The reason Eli's sons were that way is because he didn't refrain them from their evil ways. This story is 3,000 years old. The Ark of the Covenant was stolen because of their evil actions. The whole nation suffered because of their actions.

That is the same effect that we have today on our nation when our children go astray. It is encumbered to us that we have a responsibility not only to our children but we have a responsibility to our nation, culture, civilization, nation. None of us are living in a vacuum. That is why we need to follow the **ABC's of Not-So-Basic Parenting**.

A-ffirmation
B-eing Involved
C-onsistency

A-ffirmation

One of the basic things we need to do for our children is to affirm them. If we miss this, we can kiss the rest good-bye.

“And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased”

Matthew 3:17

If Jesus needed the voice of His Father how much more do we need it? Jesus was 30 years old when He received this affirmation. We seem to affirm our children well when they are younger (ie. - their first step; potty training).

“We spend the first three years trying to get them to walk and talk and then we spend the next three years trying to get them to sit down and shut up.”

We never lose our need to be affirmed or our desire to be affirmed by our parents. Studies have shown that people who are confident aren't arrogant and proud. People who are arrogant and proud are trying to compensate for their insecurity.

B-eing Involved

Kids today are becoming more *“Peer-Orientated”* than *“Family-Orientated.”* Their peers are becoming far more important than their family. Peers are not able to bring them into adulthood the way we would want them to. We have put an inordinate value on the importance of friends for our children.

Kids that are home-schooled are more socially balanced and more socially adept than kids that are in a regular school system. The home-schooled society is very carefully orchestrated and balanced.

Children Need 3 Things in Their Childhood Development

- 1. Security**
 - Peer groups cannot give security
 - Peer groups are very fickle.
 - They will turn on each other in an instant (ie. - bullying).
 - Only your family will love you unconditionally

(Contd. in Episode VI)

THE FAMILY IN FOCUS

The ABC's of Not-So-Basic Parenting

Episode VI

By Pastor Mark Hughes

We need to follow the ABC's of Not-So-Basic Parenting.

A-ffirmation
B-eing Involved
C-onsistency
B-eing Involved (Contd.)

Children Need 3 Things in Their Childhood Development

- 1. Security**
 - Peer groups cannot give security
 - Peer groups are very fickle.
 - They will turn on each other in an instant (ie. - bullying).
 - Only your family will love you unconditionally
- 2. Individuality**
 - Peer groups produce uniformity/sameness
 - Families allow for individuality
- 3. Maturity**
 - Immature people do not produce mature people
 - Parents have the ability to produce maturity in their children

For us to let go of our kids and let them spend protracted amounts of time with their peer group is actually very dangerous for them. Nowhere in scripture does it say that we are ever done parenting.

A man is to leave his father and mother and join with his wife and they shall become one. There is no time that they are to move to their peers during that time of transition. They need to have friends in their mix but that should not be their significant point of attachment. One of the big problems of our society is that we have let our teenagers go and have let them be raised and nurtured by their friends who frankly don't know nothing from nothing. Think about these combinations that show what parental influence can do- Wayne Gretsky/Walter Gretsky; Sarina & Venus Williams/Richard Williams; Elvis Stojko/Irene Stojko.

We not only need to be involved in our kids life; they also need to be involved in our life. In the old days there was a time when parents mentored their children (apprenticeships). Jesus was the Son of God but also the Son of Joseph. Jesus was raised up as an apprentice carpenter under His earthly father's guidance.

C-onsistency

This is the unknown secret to success. Dr. Leon Fiesinger found that it doesn't matter what social dynamic you go into, consistency is something that is always valued and inconsistency is always something that is always deplored.

“Let your ‘Yes’ be yes and your ‘No’, no or you will be condemned”

*James 5:12
cf. - II Corinthians 1:17*

If you say you are going to do something then do it. If you're not going to do something then say you're not going to do it

Cal Ripken Jr, (short stop for the Baltimore Orioles) is famous not only for playing baseball but also for going to work (on September 7, 1995 he broke Lou Gehrig's long time record of 2130 consecutive games without a miss). He received a 30 minute standing ovation. The first pitch that came to him he hit it out of the park.

Your message is only as good as the consistency of your behaviour. We have no moral authority to tell our children something that we are not willing to do or live. An inconsistency in our behaviour soon transfers to our children.

*“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!
16. So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”*

Revelation 3:15,16

None of us are parenting in a vacuum. Our example will not only go on for a few years, it may well go on for a few generations (Exodus 20:5). We not only need to be consistent before our children but also we need to be consistent toward our children.