

Marriage and family 101

Scripture text: Mark 10:13-16

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“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD guards the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, eating your bread of sorrows, for God grants sleep to His beloved. Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from Him.” Psalm 127:1-3

Apart from the Lord, there is no project in the world that’s really worthwhile, because it all comes to vanity. God is the Architect of the universe, so how could we think of ignoring Him as the King of every detail in our lives? The challenge of building a solid marriage and family in these convulsive times is overwhelming! We are driven toward the arms of Jesus, and back to the fundamentals He established in His Word for our protection.

1) Jesus said, *“Let the little children come to me, and don’t be a hindrance to them!”* (Mk. 10:14). This passage reveals so much about Jesus’ values, and we got to experience a lot of that this past week in Vacation Bible School – what an amazing blessing those 120 kids! According to the Bible, “making babies” is sacred business. Ps. 127 says they’re a heritage and a reward from the Lord – which is the reason why sex and marriage are also treated as sacred! Yet in our society, the growing trend favors total freedom in the matter of sex, and unborn infants are considered mere “fetal tissue.” This is the vanity that the psalmist warned us about. Yet what matters to God is not the “artificial rights” we humans obsess over, but *truth* – the true value He Himself placed within us, which lasts from conception to the grave, and beyond! His cross and resurrection made clear just how deeply He values each one of us – it was the fulfillment of the covenant He established with the race of Adam. For Jesus, all human relations are sacred, and He knows how children need to learn this as early in life as possible. That’s why He invites them to come to Him, so they can receive the Gospel seeds of truth and grace sown in their hearts that will help them learn how to call on Him in their times of trouble – their only hope!

2) Jesus says we shouldn’t hinder the children from coming to Him, but our world has created so many hindrances ... and I don’t mean just human trafficking and the exploitation of children for sex and other kinds of labor! The first “hindrances” were discovered right

there within the ranks of Jesus' followers! Remember those disciples and their reaction to the parents' trying to bring their children to Jesus? Kids were a cheap commodity in that society and not highly valued, but our society is no better. The scandals in the news about abuse of minors cover the entire range of church denominations, while kidnappings, child abuse in the home, and school shootings make clear that our world is far from being a safe place for children. Our society then responds with sexual conduct codes, security cameras, and lawsuit insurance, but at the same time promoting transgender ideology and debunking Christianity. Those messages are so contradictory and confusing.

3) At least in this story the parents *are* doing the right thing ... by bringing their kids to Jesus. Parents, this is our primary task – to bring your kids to Jesus, the true source of blessing. First we do it in prayer, then exposing them to God's Word at home (remember Dt. 6:6-9), then adding the community dimension through church. But you can't afford to think it's something automatic, just because Jesus laid His hands on them, or just because we dedicate them to Him as babies, just because you brought them to VBS or take them to church! It's not automatic and it's not about a one-off event now and then – parents have a daily role to play – a sacred relationship that requires consistency! After bringing your kids to Jesus, your marriage relationship is the biggest gift you can give your kids! So you have to work on *that* – don't let it become an obstacle to their coming to Jesus! So maybe you should start by reading the Bible together (try the Psalms – they're good "emotional intelligence therapy"). Or read a good book together ... *This Momentary Marriage* (John Piper), *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Tedd Tripp), *Transmisión de valores* (Esther Martínez), *Raising Grateful Kids in an Entitled World* (Kristin Welch). Or if you're not a great reader, watch a youtube message together, like one of the Focus on the Family resources (e.g., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgFj4m_RFc8).

Why build and guard and work in vain? Why devote our lives to vanity? We need to decide to do things God's way, commit to following Him and living by the values He established to protect us. We must realize how hopeless it is to "do family" without letting Him rule every aspect of family life. He's the only one who can rescue us from ourselves and restore us to sanity (that's how we avoid vanity!). Susie and I will celebrate 42 yrs of marriage this Tuesday – but we give God all the credit for helping us stay together and stay committed through all the trials of these years. So I want to invite you to covenant together with us before God on behalf of marriage and the family this morning. Will you recommit your marriage (or your singleness) and your family to the Lord Jesus?