

10. What does God want us to do for Blended Family, Finance, Raising Children and Keeping the marriage alone?

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At the Sunday School, Christopher learned that Eve came from Adam's side. On that afternoon, Christopher was coming into the house with a pain-stricken face while he was holding his side. His mom quickly ran across the kitchen and got down on her knees and asked him, "What's matter, Sweetheart? Are you OK?" The boy answered with all the sincerity, "Mom, I am gonna have a wife."

Marriage is not an easy thing to do. Some one who is very wise once said, "Keep your both eyes wide open before you get married. But after you get married, close one." A famous Russian writer Leo Tolstoy said, "What counts in making a happy marriage is not so much how compatible you are, but how you deal with incompatibility." Two complete different individuals sharing their lives requires a lot of love, forgiveness, respect, patience, compromises, understanding and more love.

I was passing by Pastor Gayle Erwin and his wife Aida at the Pastors & Leaders Conference in March this year. She had a small pillow behind her neck to support her neck. I asked her if there is anything I could do to make her more comfortable. They both smiled at me and said, "No." But Gayle quickly added to me, "You see, I am that pain on her for last 39 years." I responded to him, "Hey, at least you are on her neck. I am on the other side to Karen."

Marriage becomes more complicated when we get to have children; to make the matter a little more edgier, you can add financial problems; and we can even add a lot more excitement and hair rising experience with blended family situation. Furthermore, we can even make the situation get deeper with the spouse who doesn't care about God or doesn't care to stay in the marriage. Then we have a perfect situation to start to think about the rapture or disappearing from the earth to heaven without telling to anyone.

A. BLENDED FAMILY

In 1970s, single parent homes comprised 12% of all the family in America. But by 1994, 30.8% was marked as single parent homes. As those single parent families increased, we find more and more families become blended families. It is not uncommon to see more kids in the school who have mom, step-mom, dad and step-dad than just mom and dad.

Having blended family can cause many difficult situations between husband and wife and parents and children.

1) Husband and wife in a blended family

Because the majority of blended families are coming from divorced families, these husbands and wives tends to be more self-protective than the marriage that started from the ground up.

What do I mean "self-protective"? They come from already once failed marriage, they tend to look after his or her own benefit before taking care of the spouse. They don't want to get hurt again. So, they withheld their love for one another. It is normal human reaction.

2) Husband and wife in a blended family with children from the previous marriage

As I mentioned, they are already self-protective from the beginning of the marriage, the situation with the children from the previous marriage does not make it any easier. Whenever there is argument, the words "Your child" come to their hearts. Of course, the spouse with the child starts to act in the self-protective mode toward the current husband or wife.

The Bible does not specify how to react in a blended family situation. But it gives us the basic principles of marriage we can learn from which we already studied.

Mt 19:6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.

The children of the blended family tend to fill rejection toward the newest member of the family who now fill the role of mom or dad. It is a common struggle between child and stepparent. The most important and key person of the family in this situation is the biological parent of the child.

Let's make an example:

Charlie married to Susie who has a child from the previous marriage. The child's name is Amber. When Amber starts to mouth off to Charlie that he is not her father and he cannot tell her what to do and throws temper tantrum around. Charlie didn't do anything wrong to cause this situation. The situation requires a discipline from her mom because her attitude and lack of respect, it is not Charlie. Charlie should back off and let Susie should handle the situation. When Susie disciplines Amber, she must let her know what she did was wrong and disciplines her with love.

However if Susie doesn't handle the situation correctly and biblically, Amber gets a signal from Susie that it is OK to walk all over Charlie anytime she wants. What Susie did here is allowing Amber to be the one to start to break their marriage or cause so many problems in the marriage. And Susie must remember not to fight or argue with Charlie in the presence of Amber. Meanwhile, Charlie should display what a godly husband and father would do with love and patience.

1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

Let's summarize this: Biological parent should be primary disciplinarian with consistency and unity from both. Your covenant with your spouse must be thicker than the blood between you and your children from your previous marriage.

The priority in our marriage should be God first, our spouse, our children and other people, me last.

B. FINANCE

Muldoon lived alone in the Irish countryside with only a pet dog for company. One day the dog died, and Muldoon went to the parish priest and asked, "Father, me dog is dead. Could ya' be saying' a mass for the poor creature?"

Father Patrick replied, "I'm afraid not; we cannot have services for an animal in the church. But there are some Baptists down the lane, and there's no tellin' what they believe. Maybe they'll do something for the creature."

Muldoon said, "I'll go right away Father. Do ya' think \$5,000 is enough to donate to them for the service?"

Father Patrick exclaimed, "My dear child! Why didn't ya tell me the dog was Catholic?"

I was told that we think about matters related to money 50% of our awakening time. Managing money is a source of anxiety. According to the 10 years study by Dr. Aaron Beck, money is one of the top 15 reasons for suicidal tendencies. And the number one killer of the marriage in America.

Money stresses out family and marriages, especially because of misuse of credit cards.

Proverbs 22:7 The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is servant to the lender.

Money is a major issue in the Bible, too. Out of the 38 parables Jesus mentioned, 16 deals with money. More said about finance than heaven and hell combined. The Scriptures contains about 500 reference verses regarding prayer, but there are over 2000 verses regarding managing money.

There are three reasons why we get into trouble with money:

1) We don't trust God with our finance.

The majority of born-again Christians don't exercise their faith in God with their tithe and offerings. That is why evangelical churches operate on 10% of the congregation's tithe and offerings. The rest of the congregation put \$10 here, \$20 there. They do not put their trust in God's faithfulness and provision. They think that if they put tithe in God's work, they may not able to do what they want to do or survive. That is the truth about their mistrust of God.

2) We overextend ourselves without careful consideration and prayers.

We, the majority of Americans, live beyond our income. Trying to keep up with the Jones can cause us many grieves. How we try so hard to impress people who don't care! I was guilty of that, too.

God gives us His solutions to us:

1) We must trust our God not only in our eternal life, but also in our finance.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him

2) We must be contend with what we are allowed to have from the Lord.

This doesn't mean that we never strive for excellence nor not planning for future. We must exclude greed from our hearts.

1Ti 6:6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

If you are already in this credit card mess, make a tremendous effort to pay them back. Nothing wrong with using credit cards. Nowadays, you cannot use personal checks in any restaurant. It is either cash or credit card. As long as you pay off each month, you cannot go wrong. Trust me on this. I am still learning.

If you can, add extra amount to pay toward your principle. Time to time, you will see really low interest rate offer from other credit card companies. If you get approved, make a balance transfer to that account. However, here is a couple of

cautions for you. If you don't follow these carefully, the result is going to be worse than before.

First, you must make at least minimum payment or higher to keep that low interest rate. If you don't, the interest rate will literally go skyhigh, much more than you had before. Actually, I recommend you to make weekly payment. Let's say you need to make the minimum payment of \$200 per month. Send a check of \$60-70 on every Monday morning like a clock work. By doing so, it is easy on you to come up with smaller amount than a big chunk later.

Second, no matter what you must do, DO NOT charge on this account. This is just to pay down your debt, you don't want to add more on this.

While you do this, your credit rating will go up. That means more credit companies will offer you even 0% balance transfer. Be careful with a couple of credit companies: Fleet and Capital One. I don't recommend them. They have very poor service.

C. RAISING CHILDREN

There is a Chinese proverb about how to raise a child: "By the end of the day, whip your child. You may not know why, but he know why he is being whipped."

Proverbs 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13 Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

I've met several parents who wouldn't discipline their children at all even though they act like little maniacs. They think that it might crush their spirits. That is the exact point. We shouldn't allow the child to have his own way all the times, then he eventually become a selfish monster.

Our young people in America have way too much time in their hands. They don't have enough uplifting challenges that make them to improve themselves. Give them value of hard work instead of Nintendo, teach them how to earn honor than handing them everything on a silver platter. A young man I know is the case in point. When he was a kid, he got everything he wanted. Now he is a grown up, he is still a selfish brat.

You guys know Pastor Bryan Richardson from CC White Mountains in Pinetop, AZ. His son Timothy joined U.S. Marines about six month ago. Bryan told me that the Marines shaped up Timothy in twelve weeks what he and his wife couldn't do for last 18 years.

Mom and Dad, please listen to me. If you two have a difference in child discipline, you must do according to what the Word says, not how you feel, nor what some Christian psychologists say. The Word has the final authority, not shrinks. You two must agree child discipline according to the Word beforehand and minister your discipline to your child in love and unity. Please remember this: NEVER, NEVER argue in front of your children for anything, especially, regarding child discipline. If you don't, your innocent looking kids will learn how to "divide and conquer."

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Here is another important things: Please do not use the same approach what your dad did to you, nor from one child to another child. Do not compare your children from one another. Because they are all different.

D. KEEPING YOUR MARRIAGE ALONE

I know several people in our fellowship who are married to non-believers. I say, "God bless you." Stay in the marriage, if your spouse wants to stay. But if he or she wants to leave, you are not obligated to continue that marriage according to 1 Cor 7. Certainly I am not recommending you a divorce. You cannot make your unbelieving spouse to divorce you, either.

1 Cor 7:13-16 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

Please continue to pray that your spouse may come to know Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

According to the Word we have learned, the wife of this kind of difficult marriage must be submissive to the unbelieving husband. By good conducts you may win his heart over to the Lord Jesus. But if your husband tries to stop you from attending church or sabotage your efforts to walk with Christ, you must obey God over him.

If you are living in the marriage where your spouse doesn't care, you feel constant rejection, hurt, emotional confusion, temptation to bitterness and divorce. That is the time when you can really rely on God's strength to sustain you in the marriage.

Three things I ask you NOT to do:

1) Do not talk bad about your spouse to your children, even though it might be tempting or your spouse deserves.

2) Do not seek a counsel from non-believers.

You will get nothing but a garbage counsel from them. Seek your counsel from godly people. Ps 1:1-3

3) Do not seek a counsel from opposite sex exception of pastor or counselor of the church.

It is a common thing for a person with a bad marriage to talk to someone in opposite sex and get a great deal of attention. Next time, he or she will talk more about it for the sake of attention from that person. The more you do, the deeper your newly developed relationship become. Eventually, you will come up with an ungodly, but sound-good excuse to leave your troubled marriage to go with that person.

You must depend on God's Word and do what it says, nothing else.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

Luke 1:37 For with God nothing will be impossible."

It really doesn't matter what the outcome of your troubled marriage is going to be. What matter is that you are obeying God's Word and He will honor you and draw near to you.