

## **Family Matters**

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Family and parenthood are concepts many people of my generation are used to thinking of with negative connotations. We are too busy pursuing careers or remembering bad experiences from our own childhood. However, family and parenthood are of utmost importance to our society and should not be neglected.

Family is our primary source of childhood socialization. More than any other influence, parents, consciously or not, pass down their behavior as well as their genes to their children. Young children soak up the example of their parents at a surprising rate. Whether your children grow up to admire you and seek to emulate you, or hate you and distance themselves from you, your behavior as a parent sets the standard for the rest of your children's lives.

It would be very naïve to think parental or spousal abuse, divorce, or familial adherence to dogmatic religious and political beliefs has no adverse effects on childhood social and intellectual development, because we know full well that both good and bad behaviors and attitudes are learned and socially transmitted from one generation to the next. To deny the role parents play (or absence from that role) in childhood socialization is willful blindness.

I do not think our current problems with family are moral ones, or that they are somehow unique to our country. I think many of our perceptions of parenting and the family stem from economic considerations, selfishness, and greed encouraged by our consumer economy. Earning money and accumulating wealth are not in and of themselves negative, but they become detrimental when they are your sole pursuit at the expense of family and parenthood.

In our consumer culture, both men and women alike make the choice of things over people, whether it be not wanting to give up the freedom to go to bars every night, to working later and later hours at the office. Responsibility at home takes a back seat to your 2007 Ford Explorer and plasma screen TV.

This creates a climate in which pregnancy is considered the worst thing that can happen to a woman, men shamelessly run away from their responsibility as fathers, and motherhood is looked down upon as a burden or a thing of the past.

The family is the core unit of society, not just for Christians, but for human beings everywhere. We have to be conscious of the role it plays in transmitting values as well as genetic characteristics. In that way the family represents a delicate balance between nature and nurture. It should be valued by all members of society as the primary structure of our society. When the family fails, the individual fails, and when the individual fails, the family fails as well.