

Commitment in the Family

Matthew 12:46-49

Theme: Commitment

Aim: To show that successful families commit to marriage and to each other.

1. Matthew 12:46-49. In this passage, Jesus is not disavowing his earthly family, but telling us that His real family were those who were committed to Him.
2. We can quickly and easily see the value and need of commitment in the family of God. If folks aren't committed to the principles of Christianity, you cannot have a vibrant, successful, dynamic family of God.
3. But what about our own families? Commitment is certainly a characteristic of a successful family.

I. What is commitment? What does it mean to be committed to something?

A. Commitment defined:

1. "An act of committing to a charge or trust, an agreement or pledge to do something in the future, the state or an instance of being obligated or emotionally impelled."
2. I like that last definition best. We may commit to the bank for a house loan, but there is very little emotion involved.
3. But when we talk of commitment in the home we are talking of a different kind of commitment. It is a commitment of emotional and spiritual resources as well as physical.

B. That kind of commitment is exemplified throughout scripture.

1. Abraham was "obligated or emotionally impelled" to follow God to that unknown country.
2. He was "obligated or emotionally impelled" to offer his son on the altar.
3. Noah and his family was "obligated or emotionally impelled" to build that ark.
4. In the beautiful love story of Ruth, Boaz was "obligated or emotionally impelled" to redeem Ruth.
3. The Apostle Paul was "obligated or emotionally impelled" to advance the cause of Christ, at all costs.
4. Of course Jesus was "obligated or emotionally impelled" to go to the cross to save a lost humanity.
5. It is that kind of commitment of which we speak today.

II. That kind of commitment is needed today in the following two areas.

A. We need to be that committed to the institution of marriage.

1. Remember that God gave us the home and family.
2. It did not result from eons of trial and error with other arrangements.
3. Why did God give us such an arrangement? To meet man's basic needs, Genesis 2:20-25.
4. Even the secular sociologists and psychologists are coming to see the value and need of strong families in dealing with societal issues.

B. We need to commit to the marriage we are currently in.

1. Have you ever wondered why marriages of generations ago lasted so long? Commitment.
2. All too often, folks today enter marriage with the notion that if this doesn't work out, we'll just get a divorce and find someone new.
3. But to have a successful happy family we must be "obligated or emotionally impelled" to make the marriage work.

III. Why is such commitment important?

A. When I was coming of age in the 60's and 70's many of my generation began living together without getting married.

1. They defended the practice saying that marriage was just a piece of paper, and such was not needed to legitimize their relationship.
2. I find it fascinating that now, with more mature reflection, that same generation is willing to pass constitutional amendments to protect that "piece of paper."
3. Why the change? They now know the importance to society of that little piece of paper and the commitment it represents.

B. What happens when the commitment is not there?

1. Divorce and all of its concomitant problems rear their ugly heads.
2. An extreme example: see attached.
3. The breakdown of the home is the number one social problem in our society today. And it can often be traced back to a lack of commitment to the institution of marriage and the marriages folks enter into. Need to take seriously, and teach children to take seriously the marriage vows.

IV. Let us conclude by looking at how this commitment is manifested in successful families.

A. It is shown in where priorities are placed.

1. What really comes first? The proper priority list is God, family, job (or school).
2. How do we know which really comes first? Look at what wins when conflicts arise?
3. Does the job always come first before taking wife out, making the kids ball games, plays etc.?
4. Commitment to one's marriage means it really does take priority over everything but our commitment to God.

B. It is shown in a commitment to communicate with family members.

1. Need to learn better communication skills.
2. A key...turn off the television.

C. It is shown in the time we spend with family, especially our children.

1. Kids spell love as T I M E.
2. There is really no such thing as "quality time." Connecting with to affirm one another (which you have talked about) or to understand or impart values (which you will talk about) doesn't happen on a time schedule.

D. It is shown in putting others needs above your own.

1. Someone said: "Commitment means a willingness to be unhappy for awhile."
2. Putting others above self is certainly a Biblical concept that applies to families: Romans 12:3, Philippians 2:3-4.

E. It is shown in one's willingness to be and do what he/she wants other family members of the family to be or do.

1. "We must strengthen our commitment to model strong families ourselves, to live by godly priorities in a culture where self so often supersedes commitment to others. And as we not only model but assertively reach out to help others, we must realize that even huge societal problems are solved one person at a time." Charles Colson (1931-)

1. Commitment: "obligated or emotionally impelled" to be or do something.

2. Are you truly committed to the family and its success?

South Green Street, Glasgow, KY 5-11-05

Not long ago I visited my sister, a director of patient services for the children's unit of a large southern California hospital. She was conducting me on a tour through that unit. All the time--echoing through the halls--we could hear the cry of a baby coming from one of the rooms. Finally, we came to that room. It was a little child, about a year old, covered with terrible bruises, scratches, scars, from head to toe.

At first, I assumed the child must have been involved in a terrible accident. Then I looked closely at its legs. Written in ink all over them were obscenities. My sister told me that the child was the victim, not of an accident, but of its parents. Its internal injuries were so severe that it couldn't keep any food down. The scars on the bottom of its feet were burns caused by cigarettes.

If you've ever had trouble visualizing the consequences of human indifference--the perversion of life's basic relationships--what God himself is up against in this world of ours--I wish you could have looked with me at that battered, crying baby!

But I want to tell you what happened then. My sister leaned over the crib, and very carefully and tenderly lifted the child, and held it next to herself. At first the child screamed all the more, as if its innocent nature had come to be suspicious of every touch. But as she held it securely and warmly, the baby slowly began to quiet down. And finally, in spite of wounds and hurts and past experience, it felt the need to cry no more.

The baby remains in my memory as a living symbol of the choice we face in the mission of the church. Are we willing to let life's most precious values be battered and starved and crucified by default? Or will we reach out and pick them up and hold them close to our hearts? The time for commitment is not next year, next month, but now!

Philip Anderson

From: *Illustrations Unlimited*, James Hewitt