



June 10, 2022

Father's Day and the Family Structure

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

One week from this Sunday what we celebrate in the U.S. as "Father's Day" will take place. My children are grown, (we've been empty nesters for years now) but I wanted to reflect and make a few comments about the day, since just because as fathers we may not have children in the home our status doesn't change.

It's a blessing to be a physical father and grandfather. But, it's such a blessing that we can also be part of a spiritual family with the same spiritual Father that enables us to care for one another and share the wonderful truths and way of life He's bestowed upon us.

Over the years I've spent a lot of time talking with many who were asking questions about their family and how it could be better. I certainly don't claim to be the perfect father, or have or have had the perfect family. But, one of the primary focuses of many who simply don't have a happy family desire to do what is needed to have one.

Family and positive family structure is emphasized throughout God's Word and of course we find it the basic Ten Commandments.

Almost on a daily basis the family is being undermined in this nation I live in. It is hard for many to even define what a "family" is anymore. Many who have supposedly been "enlightened" or "woken up" have disregard for what God defines as the traditional family structure. When marriage and family structure fall apart and become undermined or rejected, there are consequences! The Creator has set in motion living laws. When these laws and principals are obeyed

and implemented, there will be blessings and peace. When they are ignored, attacked, and rejected, there will be curses and extremely negative consequences. This is expounded in the blessings and cursing chapters of Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, as well as many other Bible passages.

Father's Day - celebrates the *role* of fathers *in the family*. There are so many families where the father is absent because of out of wedlock births, abandonment of the family by the father, or divorce. I applaud mothers who make sincere responsible effort to raise their children and teach them values in spite of the lack of a father figure. Contrary to what is being presented, a family as God intended needs a father, and if possible, except for rare exceptions of death etc. should have one.

Our large inner cities have many problems including broken families, lawlessness, and violence. There are killings basically every night in the city of Chicago and other cities similar in size here in the U.S. It's spreading, and even bedroom communities are facing the very same issues that once were mostly in large metropolises.

For decades, we have seen who knows how many teens and even pre-teens roam the streets with no parental supervision and with no accountability. I'm reminded of within God's word "*The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.*" (Proverbs 29:15) I would add that shame is brought to the father as well, if he is around.

The prophet Ezekiel spotlights the problems in the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem which are absolutely applicable to our nation today. "*Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to shed blood in you. In you they have made light of father and mother . . .*" (Ezekiel 22:6-7) Wrong examples by the leaders, abuse of power, and disrespect of parental authority probably had a direct connection. However, when a child treats his parents with contempt, there is also a consequence. "*Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.*" (Deuteronomy 27:16) Our loving heavenly Father wants human fathers to follow His example and invest their time, attention, and love in their

children. Fathers are supposed to be directly in God's word daily, spending time in prayer, building a relationship with their heavenly Father, and then doing the same with their children.

The apostle Paul also instructs husbands to love, build up, and value his wife. (Ephesians 5:28)

Paul goes on to quote the fifth commandment in the next chapter and instruct children to honor parents. He also gives instruction and a caution to fathers. "*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*" (Ephesians 6:4) Paul then instructs bondservants to respect and be obedient to those over them. This could apply to all sorts of relationships in the workplace and community.

We're seeing all of this breaking down ever so quickly as God is removed from the daily lives of humans! God has simply become a buzz word to use by many to appear religious, when in fact He's not involved in their lives.

Also, simply put, Paul is saying that there needs to be respect for authority and also proper use of authority. When that breaks down - watch out! Something bad is going to happen.

Looking back I remember, on the evening of June 17, 2015, a mass shooter took the lives of nine African American people at a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. I pastored multiple congregations in the Carolinas at that time, and this city was in my area to serve. The massacre at a historic Black church deeply shook a nation already jaded by frequent gun violence and heralded the return of violent white nationalism in America. Another senseless killing by a 21 year old young man. I paid close attention to details that often the news media didn't cover. Details of his life emerged. What had been documented revealed a very troubled person. He had been arrested several times and during one arrest police recovered several strips of Suboxone, a powerful medication used to treat addiction to heroin and painkillers, in his possession. I was not surprised.

There is often a connection to individuals involved in mass killings using certain pharmaceutical drugs which are easily linked to aggression. At the time I also asked, what sort of family life did he have? What influenced him? It did come out. Something “snapped” inside his head for him to enter a church and sit there for an hour and then gun down 9 innocent people. What a tragedy! But influences that led to this behavior were there for some time. The news media chose to politicize the reasons. I simply wanted to know, how was his family and did it relate?

Years ago, while living in Omaha, Nebraska, I talked with many other counselors as well as youth and asked “why are you so angry? Why did you kill this or that person?” The answer always came back to the same challenge. “I was angry, and mad ...well because I didn’t have a Dad or never knew him!”

We can blame guns, violence, gangs, and hatred on so many causes, but at the root the family structure is being shattered, and it’s only going to get worse.

We as members of the body of Christ need to take our responsibility to build a healthy family structure seriously. If there are hurts and conflicts in our families, we need to do what we can to be peacemakers and heal those hurts. "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*" (Matthew 5:9) Hurts take place, but we need to not react by hurting back.

The apostle Paul instructs us, "*Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*" (Romans 12:17-18)

We can promote forgiveness, healthy communication, and showing love and mercy. We as parents have all fallen short and have made mistakes in child-rearing. By acknowledging our mistakes and learning from them we can set an example of humbly promoting growth, unity, and building up our families. We as fathers and mothers need to do our part. God clearly states, we and our families will be blessed for it! There is still time, will we choose to do so before it is too

late? Each of us individually must answer that question...

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoefker', with a large, circular scribble to the right of the name.

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