

In search of...



Truth & Right

Volume 08 Issue 14

April 7, 2013

Rearing Children

Since the creation of man, children have been part of God's plan. God's first command to Adam and Eve concerned procreation. He said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28). After the flood, God told Noah and his sons, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. . . . And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein" (Gen. 9:1, 7).

Having children is part of the natural order of things, and today, most consider procreation to be a God-given right.

There is, however, a difference between having children and rearing children. Just about anyone who is of age is capable of having children. The act of procreation itself is biological, and it requires very little knowledge and little or no commitment. This does not mean, however, that those capable of procreation are capable of rearing children. Rearing children requires extensive knowledge and a

long term commitment. Many, including the married, simply do not take rearing children into consideration when they procreate, and this becomes a problem.

It is the rearing of children that is of utmost importance to the Lord. Malachi explains the purpose of marriage in Malachi 2:15; "And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth." God's end design for marriage is that it produces godly seed. This involves many things: procreation, rearing, faithfulness, unselfish love, lifetime commitment, loving companionship, and innumerable other things. God doesn't just want procreation from marriage; He doesn't even want functioning adulthood from marriage; His end design for marriage is to have fully functioning adults who are faithful to Him. This is what the words "godly seed" entail.

This purpose weighs upon our question under consideration: Should we have and rear more children? The answer is that a couple should have and rear as many children as they can produce in harmony with God's purposes, and that is for each individual couple to decide. Obviously, couples who are infertile are not expected to do what they cannot do.

However, they may adopt, if that is something that they have the resources to accomplish. If a couple can produce, but not rear a child (for financial or other reasons), then, given the purpose of marriage, they should wait until they can be faithfully responsible in fulfilling that purpose. Like the infertile couple, they are not expected to do what they cannot accomplish.

Some in the brotherhood have suggested that couples simply produce more children indiscriminately with the idea in mind that increasing our numbers will populate the church of the future. I do not believe that this is wise advice. I have heard some preachers counsel the young married to get busy having children as soon as possible, to have as many as possible, and not to worry about the consequences. I know of at least one marriage where taking this advice ended up very badly. In years past, this counsel may have been more advisable given social conditions that were more suitable toward the maintenance of families. In today's world, however, social conditions tend toward the dissolution of the family. Christian parents would be wise to only take upon themselves as much responsibility as they are able to bear in producing and rearing children.

Another point to take into consideration in this discussion is that under the Old Covenant, procreation was mandatory.

Exodus 21:10 makes clear that a husband was not to deny the wife the "duty of marriage." Women depended upon having children in order to sustain them in old age. Children were literally the inheritance of their old age. This is the meaning of Psalm 127:3, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." The commands to Adam, Eve, Noah, and his sons are also important. God expected these commands to be followed; in return, God said that He would "have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you" (Leviticus 26:9).

Today, however, the establishment of God's covenant does not depend upon physical procreation, and the New Covenant does not enjoin upon any man the obligation to marry and procreate. In fact, Paul's inspired counsel in 1 Corinthians 7 advised just the opposite, namely, that there are some situations in which it is best not to marry at all. Obviously, such situations would also imply that it is best not to procreate. Even Jesus pointed out that some would become eunuchs "for the kingdom of heaven's sake," and then he said, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. 19:12); Jesus' point was that some may indeed choose to be single for the sake of God's kingdom; that choice is not inherently contradictory to God's New Covenant with mankind

through Christ, and if there is no obligation to marry, there is no obligation to procreate.

My wife and I have produced four children, and each one of them is a blessing; we wouldn't trade them for the world. Two of these are Christians; two are too young to make that choice right now. We chose to wait five years into our marriage to have our first child because we were young, inexperienced, poor, and not ready. At the right time we made our choices, and I know they were good choices. Having a large family is not easy, but challenging. We do not have a lot of time for ourselves. The weight of responsibility is more heavily felt. Each day brings the challenge anew, and I know that the choices we made would not necessarily be the right choices for couples in other circumstances. Having and rearing more children should not be a hasty decision, but one that is considered carefully and prayerfully, and in the end, it is the couple's choice. Preachers and teachers who push children upon unready couples would do well to memorize and observe 1 Thessalonians 4:11a and the last eight words of 1 Peter 4:15.

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This bulletin is published by the
WELLSBURG CHURCH OF CHRIST



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Wellsburg, WV 26070
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- He wanted to write about our Common salvation
- Our faith was once for all Delivered to the saints
- Sodom and Gomorrah committed sexual Immorality
- Jude said these people Blaspheme all they do not understand
- He compared them to Waterless clouds
- Enoch, the Seventh from Adam, prophesied
- Such ungodly ones are described as being Grumblers
- Worldly people are the ones who cause Divisions
- Christians are to be Building themselves up in the faith
- Save others by Snatching them out of the fire
- To God be the glory, Majesty, dominion, and authority