

The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom. Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson One Hundred Three

The Importance Of The Family

LESSON IDEA

To gain a fuller appreciation of the many advantages of the family and why it should be preserved as the basic unit of our society.

PREPARATION

Have a Bible on hand and be familiar with the numerous references concerning families — that is, the duties of husbands, wives, and children.

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WE ARE going on an ocean cruise this evening, at least in our imagination. The cruise ship is a good-sized one and we can bring along as many guests as we want. Whom shall we invite? Dad's friends from work; Mother's friends from the neighborhood, from the church, from the P.T.A.? Fine, bring them all. Do you have some relatives you'd like to invite? Aunts, uncles, cousins? Bring them along. And how about friends from school, your Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop? Or the neighborhood gang? Invite them too.

Now imagine our ship is sailing through a group of small, tropical islands in the South Seas. Suddenly, the ship strikes a reef, and begins to sink; we must get into the lifeboats. Since the islands are tiny — about a quarter acre each — it is decided that each lifeboat will go to a different island. That way, no one island will be crowded with more people than its few coconut palms and other vegetation can support.

Think back a minute to all the people you invited on the cruise. With which ones would you

choose to be stranded on an island? You must limit yourself to eight or ten choices — the maximum that a lifeboat will hold. Most American families would choose to be together — simply because they know they can trust each other. You know your father and mother are going to take care of you, even if it means sacrificing something they need; but you can't be sure anyone else will be so unselfish, can you? In spite of all the arguments, lectures, and spankings, there are still strong bonds of love, devotion, and respect uniting you. You might say that the family is a little society all of its own. It existed even before the ancient civilizations. Before there was an Egypt, or Greece, or Phoenicia, families like ours existed. After the other great civilizations crumbled — Carthage, Rome, and the rest — families remained, and together with the Church, preserved and passed on to succeeding generations the truths of the ages. As the late Professor E. Merrill Root said in *America's Steadfast Dream*, "The family goes backward to Eden and onward to Heaven"

And did you ever think of the family as a school? Why, it's one of the best; just look at all of the things you have learned since you entered this world. Many of these things have been passed along to you by your grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, elder brothers and sisters — like a baton in a school relay race. Did you ever notice what happens in a relay race when someone drops the baton? It is then very difficult for his team to keep up with the rest. And if you don't pass on the "baton" to your children and

grandchildren, it will be very difficult for them to "run the good race."

Another thing you should know is that the type of knowledge you receive from your family is unique; that is, no other family has the same combination of manners, customs, and experiences to teach its young. If it did, or if all family "schools" were the same, we would all turn out like rows of wooden soldiers, dressed in the same uniforms, walking, turning, speaking, and thinking exactly alike. Would you like living in a world of look-alikes, think-alikes, and act-alikes? Why not? *[Encourage discussion. Point out that differences, not in morals but in manners and experiences, make it interesting to meet new people. A wooden-soldier world would be boring for most of us.]*

ANOTHER WONDERFUL feature about a family is the safe, sheltered haven it provides for us to grow in. It is somewhat like the nest that is the home of the young bird. But consider how this comfort disappears when parents decide that marriage and its responsibilities are old-fashioned. Without the legal bonds of marriage, a father can use almost any excuse to leave his family. Suppose, for example, he doesn't like his job and decides he would like to be an apprentice candle-dipper in Colorado or a macrame-maker in California. What is to stop him? He has made no vows before God to take care of you or your mother, and he has signed no documents that legally bind him to provide for you. He is free to come and to go as he pleases. Would it make you feel safe and secure to have an on-again, off-again father? Or suppose your mother gets tired of cooking, washing, and cleaning and decides, since she has no legal marriage ties, to put you in a boarding school and take a high-paying job in another city. Would you like that? Why not?

Most of us take for granted that our parents will support us while we are growing up. As far back as we can remember there has been a home and a family around us, taking care of our needs. We may not appreciate all that is involved until we are grown and have children of our own.

As old age approaches, however, we have the same problem we did as youngsters: Who is going to help us when we are too old or too ill to take care of ourselves? It is a difficult problem. Nowadays the

government takes money from our pay-checks for what it calls "Social Security." After we retire we get some of this "Social Security" money back, but often it is too little to live on. If we had been allowed to keep our earnings and buy insurance from a private company we would have received more. But under the government plan, we may need the help and support of our children. Many people handle this problem by putting the elderly in an "old-folks" home." Would you want to live in such a home? *[Encourage everyone to give reasons for his answer. Point out that older family members usually have a wealth of wisdom and experience to give to younger family members. In exchange the youngsters in a family can keep the older generation mentally on its toes, and in good spirits.]*

IF WE RETURN to the idea of our family marooned on an island, we can get a clearer picture of all the family functions and relationships without the distractions of "everyday" life to cloud our view. (If you are familiar with the story, *Swiss Family Robinson*, it may make this comparison more realistic to you.)

From earliest times, the father in the family has been the pillar of protection and support. Why? For one reason, he's stronger; his muscles are bigger. So when our family finds itself on a wild and unknown island, we would expect our father to find enough wood to build fires and to make a shelter. If there are older boys in our family, we would expect them to help their father.

Because the woman is the one who gives birth to children, the mother has traditionally been the one to care for and console the young. She is also a help in every way to her husband.

And on our tropical island with its unknown dangers and uncertain food supply, think of the comfort the other members of the family would receive from a wise, stable wife and mother. Would one of today's "liberated" women provide that comfort and stability? Or would she want to leave her children and husband to care for themselves while she sought a more "meaningful" role somewhere else on the island? *[Encourage family discussion.]*

As the months pass and we get more settled, with a house built, a garden planted, and fresh water found,

our family probably would work more like a team, each of us doing what he or she is best able to do. Dad would be our leader and guide. His wisdom would direct the boys in providing wood and working the garden, the young girls in weaving cloth from plant fibers. And the mother would make sure that enough food was dried or smoked to last through lean periods. Everything would run smoothly. But what would we find if we tried the "new life-styles" that other people urge us to try? Let us see what would happen if a so-called "modern" family from Sweden were marooned as we were.

In most of these "modern" families, differences between the sexes are de-emphasized as much as possible; there is no "head" of the family, no leader and guide. From infancy boys are encouraged to play with dolls, girls with trucks; both boys and girls are sometimes identically dressed in overalls with matching haircuts.

On our deserted island such a family, left to fend for itself, would be in immediate trouble. Since the father has been "educated" to be the family moderator, and not its leader, he would probably call everyone together for a "discussion" of the possible courses of action. Perhaps a vote would be taken. The liberated mother might decide to leave the cooking to her "partner" while she fulfilled her lifelong desire to work with her hands and build a grass hut. Let us suppose that as she wanders about the island gathering grasses, she stumbles in a tangle of underbrush, twisting her ankle. Every step is now extremely painful, and she has no idea how far away the camp is, or in which direction.

Meanwhile the father and children are trying to build a shelter and fix a meal. The father, who long ago has rejected the idea of being an authoritative, paternal leader, lacks all the qualities that inspire confidence and respect. His meek suggestions are brushed off as everyone works at cross purposes. The daughter has an interest in woodworking, but without the power tools she used in her school shop, she hasn't the strength to hew the rough, heavy timbers. The boy, beginning to feel the pangs of hunger, has wandered off in search of berries or coconuts. He fails to mark his trail, however, and soon finds himself hopelessly confused and lost as darkness closes in.

The father, not knowing where his wife and his son have gone or how to go about finding them, talks the situation over with his daughter and decides to follow

her advice: to walk straight toward the rising moon and commune with the spirit world. Under such circumstances, what do you think the chances are that this family will survive? [*Encourage discussion. Emphasize the disorganization and lack of positive leadership that result when everyone does "his own thing."*]

PERHAPS SOME of you are thinking that families of the *Little House On The Prairie* type are fine for living in the wilderness but unnecessary in modern society. After all, you might say, we have technology to do much of the work; and this means that physical differences between sexes, young and old, can be minimized. This line of reasoning overlooks an important fact. The differences between man and woman, parent and child, are not merely physical; they are temperamental and psychological as well.

Woman was created, as the first book of the Bible tells us, to be a helpmeet to man — not a buddy, not a fifty-fifty partner, but a helper. God did not create an assortment of people, then decide to divide them into groups of "he's" and "she's." He created man, and from his rib he made a woman to be man's helpmeet. (Genesis 2) And in Ephesians 5:22-25, we read these words: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church . . . Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church . . ." Nowhere in the Bible do we find a passage telling us that "he's" and "she's" should be equals, or co-leaders.

Neither do we find in Scripture that children should be allowed to approve or disapprove their father's decisions. What we do find is a command for children to obey their parents and to honor them. And a command to fathers to bring up their children in the ways of the Lord and not to be so severe that they provoke their children to wrath. Let's look up those Bible verses and read them ourselves. [*Ask one family member to read Ephesians 6:1-4.*]

None of these verses have anything to do with anyone's physical size and strength; that is, children are not told to obey their parents because their parents are bigger and tougher, nor are wives to submit to their husbands for those reasons. God had

