

Till Children Do Us Part

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Children are a reward and a heritage from the Lord! (Psalm 127:3). God has blessed my wife and I with three beautiful and healthy children. Our job is to train them in the way of God and send them out into the world “like arrows in the hand of a warrior” (Psalm 127:5). This is God’s plan for our family. However, there is a perilous trap of rearing children that we must not fall into. That trap is allowing our precious little ones to become a wedge in our marriage that can cause long-lasting destructive consequences.

God instituted marriage in Genesis when He said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (2:24). I am convicted that one flesh not only refers to a couple’s sexual union but also relational union. Meaning, there should not be any third party relationship that comes between the two...ever. Simply put, there must not be any other person(s), including our children, allowed to come between us as husband and wife. How many times have you seen a family that is obviously very close in union...except for Dad? He is on the outer edge of the family doing his own thing because for years, while the children were growing up, the family was child-centered. Therefore, when the husband comes home he must either fit into the children’s activities or do his own thing. Many families today have turned into a father/mother-run household instead of a husband/wife-run household.

God’s pattern and plan has always been that we run our family from the command post of the marriage—the one flesh union. For the marriage to rear the children means husband and wife are of one flesh, one mind where the children are concerned. They see their children through one set of eyes, adhere to one child-rearing plan (God’s), aim at one set of goals, share one set of values, and act as one body when it comes to loving, teaching, and disciplining their children.¹

When parenting takes place from within the marriage, it is a beautiful thing. When a decision is to be made, the husband and wife team will make it. This helps the children understand that they do not get to go ask the dad for permission if the mother has already said no. It also creates an understanding with the children of who the boss is in the home. It’s the husband

and wife team that is **led** by the husband, who is the spiritual leader of the family. This is God's divine plan (1 Corinthians 11:3). This type of parenting also demands communication within the marriage that is essential to the marriage bond. It also creates peace in the home since the children come to know that they are not the center of attention all the time, and therefore, they can and will go entertain themselves instead of demanding the constant attention of Mom and Dad.

Notice the difficulties that families face when a family is child-centered instead of marriage-centered: First, the children lack a model of what being truly married is all about. Second, the children develop a sense of entitlement as regards to the disproportionate amount of attention and material things they receive from their parents. Third, because the parents are more concerned with having a relationship with than providing leadership to their children, the children do not receive adequate discipline. Lastly, when the normal time for emancipation rolls around, the children do not have permission to leave home (because the center of attention is too cozy.)ⁱⁱ

So what should this one flesh, husband/wife home look like? It is one where the husband leads the way in showing his children that their mother is his first priority here on earth below God. When this is done, it builds security and a healthy understanding of what marriage is all about. This home is also one where the children do not get to interrupt the conversations of the husband and wife. They also do not share the marital bed with the husband and wife or keep them from doing special things together (i.e. go on walks, dates, vacations, or time alone to talk).

Many will think this kind of parenting is hurtful to their children's psyches. This is just not the truth. That thought comes from a worldly mindset. The fact is, when marriage and parenting are done God's way, the outcome will always be a blessing to the children and the marriage. The children will grow up with a healthy view on marriage and feel secure that Dad and Mom are in this for the long haul, **till death do us part!**

ⁱ John Rosemond, *Parenting By the Book*. Howard Books, 2007, p. 120.

ⁱⁱ p.123-124.