

Session 1-Essay

Troubling Trends in Family Life

I was born in a traditional home; the youngest of seven children. My parents, although they did not have a perfect marriage, were an example of perseverance, love and mutual acceptance. I do not remember a single moment of my life fearing that my parents were going to divorce. When the time came for me to get married, I entered the sanctity of marriage with much respect and commitment; divorce was not and has never been contemplated as an option to escape differences. Unlike many couples of our generation, my husband (for 21 years) and I have stayed together through the trials of life. But when I look around today, I do not see that same commitment and respect for marriage.

Nowadays, when we turn to observe celebrities, political, and even religious figures who should serve as an example to us, we find that many of them are cohabitating or divorced; many with multiple failed marriages. It seems that marriage for many is a thing of the past. "There has been a marked increase of non-married cohabiting couples over the last few decades."¹ What was called a traditional family as I was growing up, has been challenged by an increasing complexity and diversity among families in our nation. Family trends are changing dramatically. Today, we find many parents raising their grandchildren because their son or daughter has abandoned them, is in prison, or has been declared unfit to raise their own children.

1. Hammond, Ron, & Cheney, Paul & Pearsey, Raewyn. *Sociology of the Family. (A Free Online Textbook)*. [http://freesociologybooks.com/Sociology Of The Family/01 Changes and Definitions.php](http://freesociologybooks.com/Sociology%20Of%20The%20Family/01%20Changes%20and%20Definitions.php)

Another family trend is older children still living at home after graduation and college. There seems to be a great hesitance to grow up and mature; to accept adulthood responsibility. This is also appreciated in the fact that couples are getting married at an older age than previous generations. This is not necessarily a negative issue, but it can be if the reason for it is fear of failure. For some young people opportunities to study and to advance a career have taken precedence over starting a family. Some just decide on cohabitating without any commitment; free to come and go in a relationship as it benefits them.

Single parenting is another trend that has increased in today's society. In many cases, divorce being the principal cause, but we can also attribute this fact to women having babies out of wedlock. Also, in great part as a result of divorce, is the blended family issue. This can happen as a result of remarriage, multi-generations living together, or a group of people living under the same roof due to financial constraints. Blended families can be very diverse with different living arrangements which, on occasions, become a cause of conflict when all the members do not get along.

In my opinion, one of the most alarming trends in family life today is the same sex marriage. Today more than ever, we find advocates for gays and lesbians rights threatening the church for remaining faithful to the Bible truth. Lawsuits have been issued in protest for what some believe it is discrimination and intolerance on behalf of the church and other institutions against gays and lesbians rights.

The church must be prepared to respond and to deal with all the aforementioned trends in family life today. Pastors, ministers and church leaders must educate and prepare themselves to deal with family trends and contemporary issues before they are taken by surprise, with the

need to make a determination and take a stand in spite of the consequences. How can the church continue to proclaim the Gospel, and fulfilling the purpose and plan of God for the family, while ministering to those that are not fulfilling God's will in their family affairs? We are living at a pivotal time in the history of the church. How can the church continue teaching that divorce, abortion, homosexuality, cohabitation, and promiscuity are against God's divine plan, while weathering the storm of threats against her? The church must be a place of acceptance and love for the sinner, but it must stay faithful to the Word of God and His commands. Only grounded in the Word of God and in total dependence of His divine guidance the people of God will have the wisdom and strength to continue proclaiming an unadulterated Gospel.