

Family Relationships

How many people do you know who have been divorced?

Families are falling apart at an alarming rate. Divorce is becoming more and more common – both inside and outside the church. Numerous studies have shown that the divorce rate among Christians is virtually identical to that of lost people.

Immorality is running rampant in America. Surveys reveal that half of young adults have lived with a person of the opposite sex before marriage. The trail of scarred lives and broken homes is getting longer and longer. Domestic violence and abuse are also on the rise.

Does God have anything to say about these problems? When He gave laws and guidelines to His people, He included clear instructions about family relationships. In this lesson we will discover some of those guidelines and rules.

- Deut. 22:20-21** These verses describe what was to be done if a woman was not a virgin at the time she married. What was the penalty for premarital sex?
- Deut. 22:22** What was the penalty for adultery?
- Deut. 22:23-24** What was the penalty if a man had sex in the city with a betrothed woman?
- Deut. 22:25-27** These verses give the penalty for a man having sex with a betrothed woman out in a remote field. Why was the woman innocent in this case?
- Deut. 22:28-29** If a man had sex with a woman who was not betrothed, what was he required to do?
- Deut. 22:30** This verse strictly forbids incest.

The verses you have just studied teach us that **morality is essential** for healthy family relationships. God places high value on morality. Immorality destroys trust and damages families. Christians must avoid all immoral behavior (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

- Deut. 24:1** What family problem is described in this verse?

God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), but it was common in ancient days, just as it is today. In this passage, God inspired Moses to give rules intended to prevent further defilement in Israel resulting from divorce. Jesus made it clear that God gave these rules because of the hard hearts of the Israelites (Matt. 19:4-9).

- Deut. 24:2-4** If a man divorced his wife, she married someone else, and her 2nd marriage also ended, could she remarry her first husband?

God calls such a practice an **abomination**.

Deut. 24:5 What was a man supposed to do during his first year of marriage?

The second truth about family relationships is that **divorce causes problems**. God felt so strongly about this that he wanted newlyweds to have a full year to spend together solidifying their new marriage.

The next passage teaches that we should care for one another.

Deut. 25:5-6 If a childless married man died, what was his brother supposed to do?

This passage describes a practice that sounds very strange to us. It was called **levirate marriage** and was designed to do two things: (1) provide for and protect the widow, and (2) perpetuate the name and family line of the dead man. Remember that women couldn't work in ancient times and there was no welfare system to provide for them. Widows were usually poor and often destitute. Levirate marriage provided for and protected the poor widow.

Concerning perpetuating the name of the deceased brother, God placed great importance on inheritance and family lineage. Levirate marriage kept property in the family and kept the family name alive.

Deut. 25:7-10 What would happen if the surviving brother refused to marry the widow?

God has never told Christians to practice levirate marriage, but the truth we can learn from it is that **God expects us to care for our family members**.

Concluding Thoughts: What guidelines have we discovered about family relationships? In the chapters we've studied today God has shown us that:

1. **Morality is essential**
2. **Divorce causes many problems**
3. **We should care for one another**

What areas in your family relationships need improvement?

If immorality is a problem, you need to **stop it NOW** and ask God to heal the hurts that it inevitably leaves behind. Confess your sin and seek godly counsel.

If divorce has scarred your home, seek God for healing and restoration. Only He can heal the hurts you feel.

Care for and try to meet the needs of your family members.

If we're wise, we'll do things God's way. Make a commitment to God to fix things that are wrong in your relationships with your family members. Do it right now!

Project: Take definite steps to restore and improve family relationships this week. Do the **Daily Bible Readings** each day, and don't miss Sunday School!