

Giving thanks for our families

Written by Timothy Houston
Monday, 25 November 2013 15:13



This week, all around the country, families will be coming together to give thanks. The Thanksgiving holiday weekend is one of the busiest travel days of the year. People will be traveling near and far to be with friends and loved ones. Family is the basic building blocks for communities, and it is a big part of the American culture. This week, as you and your family give thanks, take some time to reflect on what it really means to be family.

A family is an intentional creation. It is more than an accidental act, or a political or religious concept. Rather, it originates from the mind of God. As recorded in the book of Genesis, family is a deliberate creation of the creator, and it is directly blessed by God. No sooner after God creates man and woman that he blessed them and told them to create a family: "God blessed them," states Genesis 1:28, continuing, "He said to them, 'Have children and increase your numbers.'" The concept of family predates politics and organized religions. So, rather than simply being a political or religious concept, family is an undeniably divine concept. Thus, family is always spiritually correct despite a politically incorrect world.

A family is universal biblical teaching. It transcends time and space and should be never seen as old-fashioned or outdated. A family is more than an Old Testament biblical teaching. Even deep into the New Testament, the concept of family is valued as a foundation that was especially designed by God. Paul verifies this fact in his letter to the Ephesians, commenting, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named (Ephesians 3:14-15)." The New Testament reminds us that you will find families in heaven and earth. Families are a universal concept that supersedes the Old Testament. Thus, family is always in relevant and in style.

A family is a basic building block for a community. It is more than a household unit. In the Bible, every family represented a microcosm of the community within which it lived. Therefore, when families failed, the community itself failed. In times of crisis, families were relied upon to support and strengthen the community. For example, Moses was charged to offer the following order to his followers: "Make sure there isn't a man or woman among your families or tribes who turns away from the Lord our God (Deuteronomy 29:18)." The family served as a keeper of the core values of the community in which it lived. Thus, family is always communal especially in times of crisis.

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What is a family? It is a communal, spiritually correct, relevant, intentional creation by God. It is more than a domestic unit that is only defined by the number of parents and children. Family connects us to others outside of our households. Although your family unit is defined by you, it is measured by your community. Your culture, religion, and language are also important ingredients and they will bind you with others of like conviction. Family is natural and spiritual. Forged in the mind of God, it is and will forever be divinely created, and for that, we give thanks!

Timothy Houston is an author, minister, and motivational speaker who is committed to guiding positive life changes in families and communities. For copies of his book, questions, comments or more information, go to www.tlhouston.com.