

An Affirmation of Family

The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred of any human relationship on earth. God instituted the family as the primary provider of the warm and caring relationships for which the human heart yearns.

In the family circle, deep and abiding needs for belonging, love, and intimacy are met in significant ways. God blesses the family and intends that its members will help each other in reaching complete maturity and wholeness. In the Christian family, the personal worth and dignity of each member is affirmed and safeguarded in an environment of respect, equality, openness, and love. In this intimate circle the individual's earliest and most lasting attitudes toward relationships are developed and values are conveyed from one generation to another.

God also intends that a revelation of Himself and His ways be gained from the family relationship. Marriage, with mutual love, honour, intimacy, and lifelong commitment as its fabric, mirrors the love, sanctity, closeness and permanence of the bond between Christ and His church. The training and correcting of children by their parents and the loving response of offspring to the affection shown them reflects the experience of believers as children of God. By God's grace the family may be a powerful agency in leading its members to Christ.

Sin has perverted God's ideals for marriage and family. Furthermore the increasing complexity of society and the enormous stresses which fall upon relationships, lead to crises within many families today. The results are evidenced in lives and relationships that are broken, dysfunctional, and characterized by mistrust, conflict, hostility and estrangement. Many family members, including parents and grandparents, but especially wives and children, suffer from family violence. Abuse, both emotional and physical, has reached epidemic proportions. The rising number of divorces signals a high degree of marital discord and unhappiness.

Families need to experience renewal and reformation in their relationships. This will help change the destructive attitudes and practices prevalent in many homes today. Through the power of the gospel, family members are enabled to acknowledge their individual sinfulness, to accept each other's brokenness, and to receive Christ's redemptive healing in their lives and relationships. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, and restoration from damaging experiences may not be fully accomplished, where the love of Christ reigns, His Spirit will promote unity and harmony making such homes channels of life-giving joy and power in the church and community.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Fundamental Belief on Marriage and the Family

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church.

God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message.

(Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)