

## Marriage, have the boundaries shifted?

by Hendrik Joubert

We live in a society where it is considered foolish for a young woman not to attend college and prepare herself for a successful career. *A woman can do anything a man can do*, and equality with men is demanded. God created male and female, each with unique abilities in ways which they will never be equal. God made them this way so they would compliment each other, to work together as a unit in a relationship called marriage. There are things a woman can do that a man will never be able to do, and vice versa.

It is not necessary for a female to get married or bear children. (**1 Corinthians 7:25-40**) Equally a man does not have to enter a marriage relationship and raise children. There also are marriages where children could not be naturally conceived, or are not raised by choice. It all boils down to choices exercised. When a woman and a man decide to enter a marriage relationship which is pleasing to God, both have to accept responsibilities given them by the Lord. It should be pointed out that the reason for not entering a marriage relationship as stated by the apostle was because of a focus on the life hereafter. (See also **Matthew 19:11-12**) God should be acknowledged in the choices we make.

Over time every society is in the process of shifting barriers. We often find ourselves chuckling at the conservative views of the past as we talk about what our parents would not allow us to do. The standards and beacons for what constitutes right or wrong may be described as a drifting. We have certainly noticed this in the realm of human relationships. Homosexuality is no longer a thing to be ashamed of; it is an alternative lifestyle which is demanded. Likewise, male and female couples living together do it with no shame – some may even be living with their parents.

Attitudes towards the family and the role of the father and the mother have also changed. The male is no longer the breadwinner of the family while the wife takes care of the children. Mothers have to work to *make ends meet*, and this does not mean merely to have *food and shelter*. Consider how many problems we face may be traced back to a disregard for the following: ***But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. <sup>7</sup> For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. <sup>8</sup> If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. <sup>9</sup> But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*** 1 Timothy 6:6-10

We do not love money, right? We love the things money buys. We want stuff for which one cannot depend on dad's income only. Mom has to go out and work to *help ends meet*. Making ends meet involves sending our children to college so they will make a good living – in this life. How much emphasis is placed on this life where we ***are but a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away?*** James 4:14

Consider the problems we have in our society result from the fact that the family is not functioning as God designed it. With mom not home children are entrusted to strangers to raise them. Yet we are surprised when our children do things *we do not understand* – *where did they get it from?*

When the Hebrew writer points out that we should take special care *lest we drift away* and neglect the *great salvation* which was *first spoken through the Lord*, and then *confirmed by those who heard* (**Hebrews 2:1-4**), do we think of how we may have drifted when it comes to

the proper functioning of the family? In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians the Lord warns: ***Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." 1 Corinthians 15:33.*** Peer pressure is not limited to children and teenagers. Societal pressures bear down on the church causing a drifting which ultimately results in some drastic changes, which may or may not cause division. Often we learn to live with it as we are too afraid to move back barriers which have been accepted by our brethren.

Divorce and remarriage is only part of the problem. Our barriers have shifted to where we accept standards which make for dysfunctional families. We do not want to be seen as a backward group of ultra conservatives?