

Considering Children

*From Terri Neal, Associate Pastor of Preschool Ministries
With Kurt Bruner, The Center For Strong Families*

Couples that are contemplating starting a family will be confronted with a materialistic and leisure-focused culture that tends to dwell on the challenges more than the joys of parenthood. Couples today tend to worry about the effect that children will have on their education, career and lifestyle more than past generations did. As a result, they are often encouraged to push family off a little longer while enjoying the perceived freedom of life before children.

What couples can lose sight of during such a cost/benefit analysis are the grand and often mysterious purposes God has for children within marriage. Even the Christian community can lack vision for just how central the efforts of starting and raising a family are to God's plan for our lives. That's why it is important to ask yourself several pertinent questions.

QUESTION ONE: Are Children Part of Your Life's Purpose?

"Be fruitful and multiply" was the first charge God gave His creation in the garden. While each of us have distinct strengths, passions and experiences that guide what we do in life, marriage and parenting are a general calling that applies to most people of faith. And while having children isn't the only purpose for marriage, it is very closely tied to God's original design for marriage and should not be discarded without serious, prayerful reflection.

When we raise children, we cooperate with God's desire for "godly offspring" (Malachi 2:15). Parenting is also the primary way most of us fulfill the call to lay our lives down for others (Philippians 2:4-8). Producing and guiding the next generation is a mission that stretches us and pushes us to depend on God like few other things in life, all the while revealing and shaping our larger purpose within God's plan for humanity.

QUESTION TWO: Are Children a Blessing or a Burden?

In the past few years, social commentators have used words like "ankle biters" and "yard apes" to describe children and the stress they bring with them, but. God calls children a blessing (Psalm 127:3-5). Even in the face of the daunting and exhausting challenge of parenting, children provide the joyful reward of marital and parental love. Studies consistently find children are people's greatest source of happiness.

QUESTION THREE: Who is Your Provider?

Couples seeking to start their families may feel overwhelmed by a variety of concerns about being pregnant, giving birth and adjusting their marriage, budget and lifestyles. This can be a natural response because babies do change everything and push couples beyond themselves, but God is faithful. Paul told the Corinthians, "and God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). Having children is a good work and gives couples new opportunities to see how God is able to supply what they need.

GOING FURTHER

Resources

Recommended Book:

These titles are available to check out from the UBC Library or to preview at The Porch. Additional titles on this subject are also available in the Library.

Start Your Family (by Steve & Candice Watters) provides inspiration for those considering children and practical insights from his and her perspectives.

Considering Children

Recommended Website:

<http://family.custhelp.com/> includes practical advice for the pregnant season as well as information about what life will be like once your baby arrives.

Church Support

To speak directly with a staff member, please contact:

Terri Neal, Associate Pastor of Preschool Ministries

Terri.Neal@UBC.org

281-488-8517