

# Helping Families Flourish

Throughout the Bible the family is fundamental to God's vision for human beings and human society. God formed the first family, uniting Adam and Eve in marriage and delegating to them authority and responsibility for God's creation (Genesis 1:27–29, 2:15–25). When God sent a flood to cleanse the earth, he saved a family (Genesis 7:1–7, 8:18). When God called Abraham and Sarah he promised to bless all the families of the earth through their family (Genesis 12:1–5). Two of the Ten Commandments offer foundational guidance to families on honoring parents and faithfulness in marriage (Exodus 20:12, 20:14). The biblical wisdom literature is replete with exhortations and descriptions of family relationships as the key to human flourishing (Proverbs 1:8).

When God sent his Son to be our Savior, Jesus was born into and raised by a human family (Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38). When the Apostles preached the gospel, salvation often came to entire families (Acts 16:33). The New Testament epistles give considerable attention to relationships within both the nuclear and extended family. The family is a primary metaphor for understanding our relationship with God our Father and with fellow believers as our brothers and sisters.

Like modern families, biblical families often fell far short of their divine calling. When confronted with their sin, Adam and Eve blamed each other; their firstborn son, Cain, murdered Abel and then denied any responsibility for his brother. The offspring of biblical heroes often did not live up to their godly heritage. Jesus warned that his message would divide some families, and he made clear that allegiance to him must take precedence over any human relationships. Nevertheless, God continues to bless families and uses them to bless his world.

Recognizing that the family is central to God's vision for human beings and human society, the National Association of Evangelicals calls on church, school, business and government leaders to take steps appropriate to their distinct callings to facilitate the vital work of mothers, fathers and guardians, who retain the primary responsibility for the nurture of their children into responsible adulthood. We offer this call with renewed urgency in light of new needs and opportunities to serve vulnerable parents who choose life.

Churches play a key role in strengthening families both in the congregation and in the community. Church leaders should:

- Teach and model biblical principles about marriage in God's plan as a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman leading to the nurture of children into responsible adulthood;
- Consider ways to support family life throughout the week by, for example, hosting early childhood education, senior day care, or respite events for parents and caregivers;
- Ensure that church volunteers and staff have adequate time to care for their families;
- Offer practical and emotional support to families facing challenges and crises, including caring for children who are living with disabilities;
- Encourage and support families involved in adoption and foster care; and

- Support individuals in the congregation and community who live alone.

School personnel spend many hours each day with our children. We call on them to:

- Focus on the core task of ensuring that every child is safe and receives an excellent education, with both the skills and the character to serve as mature citizens and contributing members of their communities; and
- Recognize and respect the rights and responsibilities of parents as the primary educators of their children and as the ones entrusted with the sacred responsibility of guiding their children in identity formation and moral development.

Companies that market to children should be especially mindful of how their products impact families. We call on them to:

- Develop products and services that contribute to healthy development and promote responsible citizenship;
- Build in safeguards that detect patterns of addiction and abuse and provide appropriate feedback to users; and
- Facilitate parental oversight and control of content that is delivered to minor children.

Governments are instituted by God for the common good. Elected leaders should design effective and sustainable public policies with the needs of children and families in mind. We call on them to:

- Enact tax policies that provide favorable treatment for families, who are raising the next generation; we are grateful for the Child Tax Credit and urge that it be increased and improved;
- Provide every mother with access to prenatal and postpartum care for herself and for her child;
- Guarantee access to paid family leave to all new mothers and fathers — including those welcoming children by adoption and foster care — and to family members accompanying loved ones at the end of life;
- Preserve the right of parents to guide their children's education and development particularly in the sensitive areas of sexuality and gender identity;
- Protect women from discrimination on the basis that they are or may become pregnant;
- Reinstate usury and consumer protection laws and regulations that protect financially vulnerable families and individuals from abuse; and
- Expedite issuance of family reunification visas so that immigrant families separated from their spouses, parents or siblings and facing extended waiting periods are more quickly reunited.