

SOCIAL STUDIES 1208

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

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THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

One of the social sciences is sociology. This field of study emphasizes relationships within human groups and interconnections among social institutions. Its primary subject matter is human societies. As humans who interact within society, we should examine ourselves, our institutions, and how these fit together.

The concept of the primary group, or family, is one of the most basic in all sociology. Primary groups are fundamental to human social life

because they provide the individual with important bonds of intimacy and affection. They play a major role in shaping one's personal identity.

In this LightUnit you will study the history of the family and the extended family. You will also consider the requirements and responsibilities of a new family: knowing yourself and understanding your partner.

OBJECTIVES

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you should be able to do when you have successfully completed this LightUnit.

When you have finished this LightUnit, you should be able:

1. To describe the importance of the family in the Bible.
2. To identify the basis of the family and the roles of its members.
3. To explain the function of the family.
4. To define the various parts of an extended family.
5. To tell how the extended family influences the basic unit of society.
6. To identify the role young people have in their immediate and extended family.
7. To identify the goals of marriage.
8. To explain character development and personality differences.
9. To tell the responsibilities of each marriage partner.

Survey the LightUnit. Ask yourself some questions about this study. Write your questions here.

I. THE FAMILY

The family is the basic unit of society and, consequently, is of utmost importance. The Lord's plan of structuring a **culture** around the family structure has continued through the ages.

In this section you will study the influence of the Bible on the family, the meaning and the composition of the family, and the importance of understanding family members.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Read these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able:

1. To describe the importance of the family in the Bible.
2. To identify the basis of the family and the roles of its members.
3. To explain the function of the family.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

acceleration

dominant

social

artifacts

empathy

socialization

cohesion

nurtured

submissive

crucial

obligation

tempering

culture

pervasive

values



Note: All vocabulary words in this LightUnit appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given in the Glossary.



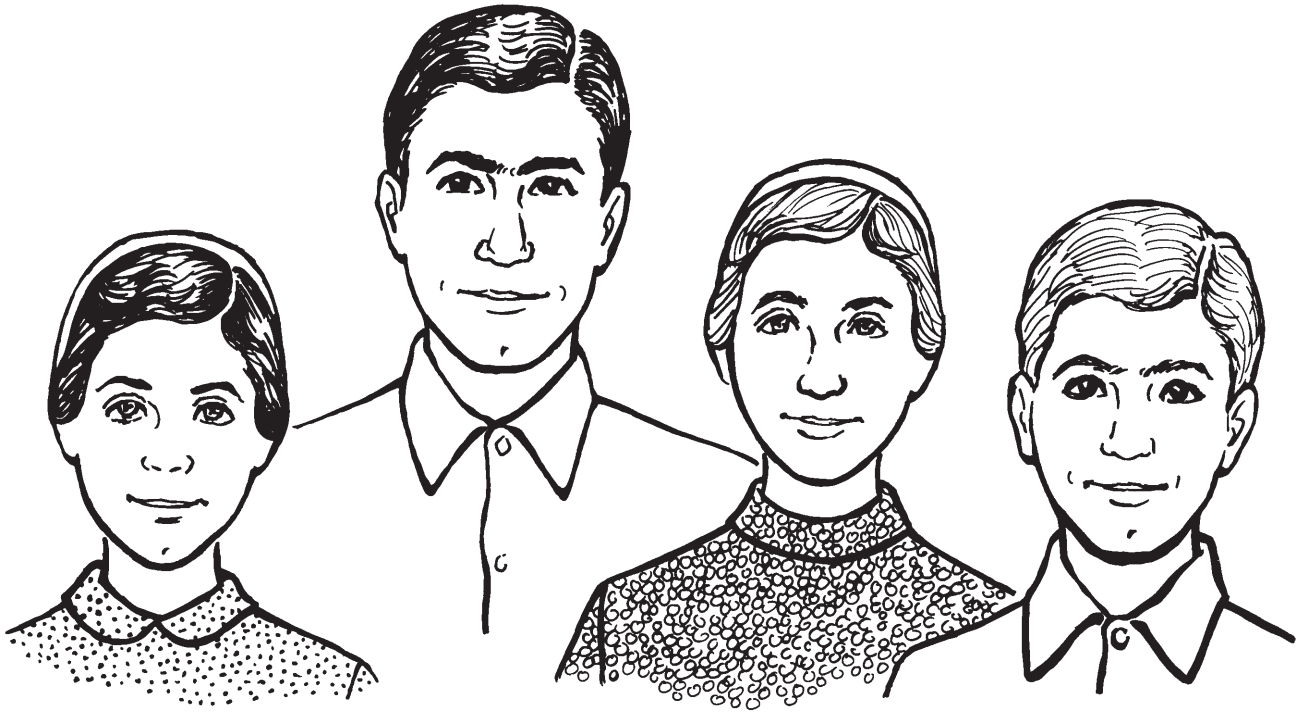
Read Genesis 5:1 through 2; Leviticus 25:45; and First Samuel 9:21 and 10:21.



THE NATURE OF THE FAMILY

The family is a complex, close-knit group of related people who share a mutual bond of affection, interests, aspirations, and objectives. Most families are composed of interdependent adults and children. Their day-to-day interaction helps to shape the personalities of each member, especially those of the children. The family is an institution that is as old as the creation of man and remains today the most respected and accepted form of group structure.

Biblical history. Society's first family unit is described in Genesis 1:27, 28. The Scripture indicates that God's plan was for Adam to begin a family and thereby to form the foundations of civilization. The family was to be fruitful, to multiply, to replenish the earth, and to have dominion over everything on the earth. Adam and Eve began the first family unit. Throughout the centuries the family has been the model for the strongest and most enduring of all institutions.



The Bible gives many indications that families and their members are very important. The Lord spoke to Moses near Sinai in the fourth book of Moses (Numbers 1:1-16) telling him to number the people by families, to take a census. In the following verses (17-54) the people from each family were named. A name gave a definite sense of identity, self-respect, and honor to the people who had been called upon to set up a tabernacle and to guard it.

When the Lord spoke to Moses telling him that he would take the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, specific families were named in Exodus 6:14.

Another indication that the family is an important unit of civilization appears in Leviticus 25:45. The Lord told Moses that any strangers who dwelled among the Jews should also be considered as families and should be treated in accordance with specific rules.

During Biblical times, the land was divided according to families. In the Book of Joshua, each person's share was given according to the family status.

When the Lord told Samuel (1 Samuel 9:16) that a man would appear whom he should anoint to rule over the people, Saul appeared. When he was asked by Samuel to identify himself, Saul said that he was a Benjamite and that his family was the humblest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin.

Definition of the family. Within a large collection of people, we discover several groupings of individuals. The basic, or primary, group is usually associated with personal intimacy and commitment between its members. The family's members should maintain a face-to-face and open kind of relationship.

A family may be defined as a **social** group based upon marriage and the marriage contract. This contract includes all the rights and responsibilities of parenthood; a residence for husband, wife, and children; and a mutual economic **obligation** between husband and wife.

Because the family is a social group, you should understand the nature of society of which it is a part. A society is a relatively large collection of people, or population, that has a common **culture**. A culture includes all the **values**, customs, beliefs, and **artifacts** of a particular society. The **cohesion** of a society is primarily the result of a common language passed from generation to generation.

The culture of a society has some of its most subtle and **pervasive** effects through language. Language embodies a special way of looking at the world and of interpreting experiences. When the Lord spoke of the family, those who heard Him knew exactly what He meant.



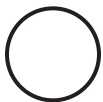
Complete these statements.

- 1.1 A family may be defined as a a. _____ group based upon b. _____ and the c. _____.
- 1.2 A society is a population that has a common _____.
- 1.3 Moses numbered the people by their _____.
- 1.4 Language gives a special way of looking at the _____.
- 1.5 The primary group in a society is the _____.
- 1.6 The family's members should maintain a _____ relationship.
- 1.7 In Leviticus 25:45 the Lord told Moses to consider as families the strangers _____.
- 1.8 Society's first family unit is described in _____.



Complete these activities.

- 1.9 List the items included in a marriage contract.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
- 1.10 List the items that comprise a culture.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
- 1.11 Write a paper (two hundred words) telling about the customs or traditions in your family.



THE COMPOSITION OF THE FAMILY

The primary group, the family, is composed of husband, wife, and children. It ideally has an environment where inner feelings and frustrations can be expressed in an atmosphere of **empathy** and affection. Within this framework the value system of a society can be preserved.

As this primary group interacts, the various combinations of personalities become important. To understand the composition of the family, both the individual personalities and the depth of the existing relationships must be considered.

Variations in personalities. Understanding the individual is the key to harmonious family

interactions. For example, some people are restless or energetic. They may pace up and down and move around a great deal. An individual who is not restless may find this activity annoying. Some people may set their goals too high; and when they fail to attain those goals, they suffer humiliation. Other people seldom set unrealistic goals; consequently, they rarely experience severe disappointment. Because of differences in personalities, the time and effort invested to truly understand each other will enhance one's personal life and relationships with loved ones.

Because each individual is unique, to expect anyone to fit or to be forced into a mold is

unrealistic. However, individuals can be characterized according to the kind of general personality traits they exhibit. At one end of a personality scale is the **dominant** person; and at the other end, the **submissive** one. The dominant person seems to be one who likes to assert himself. A submissive person usually is non-assertive. Those who think out every situation carefully tend to be more serious than their opposites, who are light and carefree.

Some persons are able to control their emotional lives so that when conflict occurs, they can adjust their actions accordingly.

One should be knowledgeable about the various personality traits and should know how people with certain traits will interact. The intensity of an individual's personality traits often determines his ability to cope with life's situations.



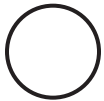
Answer true or false.

- 1.12 _____ The primary group is composed of husband, wife, and children.
- 1.13 _____ Understanding the individual is the key to harmonious family relations.
- 1.14 _____ A person can be precisely characterized by personality type.
- 1.15 _____ People exhibit general personality traits.



Complete these activities.

- 1.16 List three kinds of personality traits.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
- 1.17 Study the personality traits of any person in the Bible. Write one hundred words describing that person.



Development of personalities. Each member of a family has experienced **socialization** through his culture. This culture has had an impact on his personality. As someone once said, "We are the sum total of our experiences." To understand and to cope with the results of this socialization, each person needs to know and understand his cultural background.

As you have read, people are individuals with varying personalities. The socialization that takes place throughout childhood has an impact on one's personality, but only as adaptation is necessary. People learn to adapt to stressful

situations as they arise.

Families composed of individuals that fall at the extremes on the personality-trait scale find the **tempering** of traits difficult. When the members of a family have experienced extremely different cultural backgrounds because of adoption, relocation, or culture change, the many stresses of living together become evident. Under these conditions family members should be aware of the many needs, desires, and aspirations of their loved ones and make the appropriate adjustments in their own behavior. They should be understanding in their interaction.

The child that is **nurtured** in a home of emotional warmth usually is able to develop and to express his feelings without any thought of being thwarted. As the child becomes an adult and forms his own family, his personality will probably show this strength and understanding toward his partner and children. The person raised in an indulgent home, on the other hand, may feel that his partner and his children need his constant protection and his stern guidance, thereby giving his dependents a feeling of helplessness. He probably has assumed that his role is one of complete dominance in all situations.

In Deuteronomy 4:14 the people were told that the Lord had given them rules and

regulations along with their heritage. Those that remained within this framework and that followed the Lord's way would rule with wisdom and understanding.

In Job, Chapter 28, an extensive explanation of wisdom is found. These words aid us in understanding those who have been nurtured in an environment of warmth and enriched by a religious life.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul writes (Colossians 1:9-10), "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."



Complete these activities.

- 1.18 What things can account for differences in cultural backgrounds in a family?

- 1.19 List three things family members should do when the family experiences stress because of cultural differences.
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
- 1.20 Give three characteristics of a Christian family atmosphere.
a. _____ c. _____
b. _____



Complete these statements.

- 1.21 Every person is socialized through his _____ .
- 1.22 A person's culture has an influence upon his _____ .
- 1.23 "We are the sum total of our _____ ."

Of all the socializing agents that leave their mark on the child's developing self, the family is the most **crucial**. Adults within a family make choices with foreseeable consequences for which they can prepare; but a child is very dependent and, hence, profoundly affected by everything around him. Consequently, the home atmosphere is of utmost importance to ensure proper child guidance.

When a person has been raised in a loving family atmosphere, he will usually listen to, consider, and support the other members of his family. He usually is an understanding parent. At the other extreme, a person raised by a dominant parent may feel that he must be continually giving suggestions and may become impatient when these suggestions are not followed.

The danger of an overly active parent is that the home atmosphere may be devoid of family interaction and discussion because of his absence. Families need to have times of verbal interactions to encourage understanding between a parent and a child. A problem also arises when parents urge a child to achieve further development and accomplishments beyond his ability. The effect of this kind of influence is that the **acceleration** may cause discouragement and conflict.

Another important influence provided by the family is the opportunity it gives the child for socialization in group functioning. Through the interaction within this group, the child receives his first and most impressive lessons in competition and cooperation, intimacy and distance, and relaxation and tension. Therefore, family socialization has a tremendous impact on the child's developing self. This early training should be positive and consistent with principles of love and Christian education.



Complete these statements.

- 1.24 The family is most crucial as a _____ agent.
- 1.25 A child is very dependent and is profoundly affected by the home _____.
- 1.26 A person that has been raised in a loving family atmosphere usually is an _____ parent.
- 1.27 The dominant person is usually quite _____.
- 1.28 The overly-active parent may squelch all _____.
- 1.29 The family offers a child opportunities for socialization in _____.



Write true or false.

- 1.30 _____ You do not need to know members of your family.
- 1.31 _____ The family is not a socializing agent.
- 1.32 _____ Overly-active parents can hinder communication in the family.
- 1.33 _____ The customs of your family have very little to do with you.
- 1.34 _____ A domineering person creates a loving atmosphere.
- 1.35 _____ A Christian person listens to, considers, and supports others.



Complete this statement.

- 1.36 Through the interaction within this group, the child receives his first and most impressive lessons in _____.



Complete these activities.

- 1.37 Write a 300-word paper explaining what you believe to be the most important area of life with your family and why this is important to you.

