



Readings in Family Issues

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Family life has become the focus of intense analysis and widespread reconstruction. Numerous experts from a multitude of perspectives are making contributions to a growing body of literature which explores family issues. The diversity of the writers' perspectives, the multiplicity of issues, and the volume of material make recommending key readings difficult and risky. Nevertheless, I venture the following offerings as current, important contributions in this arena of ministry.

Two journal articles contain the most responsible work on biblical views on family. Walter Brueggemann in "The Covenanted Family: A Zone for Humanness," *Journal of Current Social Issues* 14 (October, 1977) 18-23, suggests that in the world of biblical faith, the family is the primary unit of meaning which shapes and defines reality. Both Brueggemann's article and "What Does the Bible Say about the Family," by Aurelia and Zoltan Fole, *A.D. Magazine* 4 (May, 1975) 21-22, point out the importance of discriminating between sociological data and intentional faith affirmations when considering biblical information on family.

Family systems theory, although in its pioneering stages, presently holds center stage in providing the conceptual framework for understanding and helping families. Three books provide an introduction to this movement. C. Margaret Hall's book, *The Bowen Family Theory and Its Uses* (New York: Aronson, 1979) briefly introduces the family systems concepts of Murray Bowen (a major figure in the movement), draws implications for counseling and personal growth and provides concrete examples of its use. *The Family Crucible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), a quick, easily-read paperback by August Napier and Carl Whitaker, provides a thorough picture of the use of this understanding of the family in counseling. Virginia Satir (another major figure in the movement) provides a brief practical summary of family systems notions and their potential use in family enrichment and parenting in her book *Peoplemaking* (Palo Alto: Science & Behavior, 1972, 1975). It is not only very understandable but contains suggestions for implementation of her notions with couples and families.

New Approaches to Family Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) by Douglas A. Anderson combines current family systems concepts, family devel-

opmental notions, metaphoric communication, the Bible and the work of the Holy Spirit as components in his presentation of a practical approach to pastoral work with families. Anderson's weaving of solid psychological findings with the Judeo-Christian tradition provides the reader with theological depth and seminar material for constructing one's own approach to the pastoral counseling of families. It introduces the trainee to the salient elements of a uniquely

pastoral counseling model for work with families; it challenges the master craftsman to the broad scope of resources available to the practitioner.

Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith's *Family Ministry* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1980) presents a series of essays which focus on the crucial issues involved in designing ministry to, with and through families in a parish setting. Their compilation of articles contains solid theory, background information and a wealth of practical suggestions for making family ministry work.

Several specific facets of family study have drawn particular attention. Most important among these are sexuality, communication, marriage enrichment, parenting and chemical dependency.

Stephen Sapp presents a careful and clear summary of the best current work on the biblical, biological and behavioral science views of sexuality in *Sexuality, the Bible and Science* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). Sapp ties these findings together in an excellent final chapter entitled "Reconstruction: A Dialectical View of Human Sexuality."

Venturing one or two representative titles in the diverse and dynamic arena of sexual role studies is impossible. These four are broadly representative, provocative and sensitive to the Judeo-Christian heritage. *Women, Men and the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977) by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott is an eloquent case for a Christ-inspired attitude of "mutual submission" between persons. *Jesus According to a Woman* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1975) by Rachel Conrad Wahlberg is a review of Jesus' contacts with women. Wahlberg asserts that traditional interpretation of these texts has ignored significant aspects of them and neglected to take note of Jesus' treatment of women as radically different from that which was current in his time. Rosemary Ruether and Eugene Bianchi provide a biblical paradigm for sexual liberation in *From Machismo to Maturity: Woman-Man Liberation* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1976). Clergy and congregations working out the unknowns of a first female clergyperson will find Elsie Gibson's *When the Minister Is a Woman* (New York: Holt, 1970) helpful.

Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980) by Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Mollenkott is a fair and comprehensive summary of the current research and perspectives on homosexuality. One need not agree with the authors' conclusions to benefit significantly from their excellent research. Charles Silverstein's *A Family Matter: A Parents Guide to Homosexuality* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1977) is a helpful resource for those ministering to the families of homosexuals. Those counseling with homosexuals will find Clinton Jones' *Homosexuality and Counseling* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) of great assistance.

Alive and Aware (Minneapolis: Interpersonal Communications Program, 1975), or its synopsis, *Couple Communication I: Talking Together* (Minneapolis: Interpersonal Communications, 1979) by Sherod Miller *et al.* is an excellent portrayal of the concepts, attitudes, styles and skills which enable people to express themselves more clearly, accurately and openly while gaining a greater under-

standing and awareness of each other. The notions in this book can be further explored through an excellent workshop offered by Interpersonal Communication Programs, Inc., of Minneapolis. These readings and this workshop are an excellent introduction to understanding and facilitating the improvement of couple and family communication.

Marriage and Family Enrichment: New Perspectives and Programs (Nashville:

Abingdon, 1976), edited by Herbert A. Otto, is a survey of what is presently happening in marriage and family enrichment in the United States and Canada. His well-screened samplings provide not only descriptions of the programs but spell out the philosophy behind the programs and concretely delineate the programs, procedures and resources.

Two out of five marriages result in divorce; three out of four of those divorced remarry; consequently the church and its clergy are increasingly involved in ministering to the divorcing or divorced and performing second marriages. Out of the reams written on divorce, two books are representative: *When Marriage Ends* by Russell J. Becker (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) and *Divorce: Prevention or Survival* by William V. Arnold *et al.* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977). Not much is available on remarriage. Darlene McRoberts' *Second Marriage* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), written from both a personal and theological perspective, is a good beginning reading. Watch for a spate of new works to come in the near future on this controversial and important issue in the pastoral care of families.

You Can Be a Great Parent (Waco: Word, 1970) by Charlie Shedd, written for popular consumption, is a profound yet practical work that combines Christian perspectives, some of the best of the behavioral sciences and good humor. It is an easily understood book on parenting for families with children two and older.

Phil Hansen's *Alcoholism: The Afflicted and the Affected* (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic, 1974) is an excellent introduction to the dynamics of a disease that is systemic. Hansen helps his readers understand co-dependency and the "alcoholic family;" he not only portrays the effects of the alcoholic on the family but also the part the family plays in sustaining the disease. In addition, both the Hazelden Foundation of Center City, Minnesota, and Johnson Institute of Minneapolis offer numerous current pamphlets reflecting recent discoveries of the relationship of chemical dependency to the family system.

Approximately one-third of the adults in America are single. Within the growing corpus of literature exploring this phenomenon, Nicolas Christoff's book *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978) stands out. Christoff is both informative and provocative. Single himself, he leads the reader into the singles world, explores the church's image within the world and provides counsel to both singles and churches for their ministries with one another.