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Editors' Notes

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Editors' Notes

Stuart and D'Esta Love

One of the most important topics for contemporary ministry is the family. Your editors have taught a course for over twenty years on this theme at Pepperdine University. We have come to expect our students to ask hard questions about the relevance of the Bible's message regarding marriage and the family. Every semester we discover that over half our students come from broken homes—and these are Christian students. They ask honestly, Is meaningful permanence possible today? Can two people have a lifelong growing, dynamic marriage relationship? Are marriage and the family as we read about them in the Bible relics of the past? What Dorothy told Toto may be true of us—we are no longer in Kansas.

It can hardly be denied that the modern nuclear family and its changing roles of male and female parents are not at all like their counterparts in the biblical social world. Kinship in ancient Israel included the tribe, the clan, and the "father's house." Greco-Roman households included not only blood relatives of the head of the household but also other dependents—slaves, employees, and that peculiarly Roman category known as "clients." In other words, the families of the Bible were different in kind, with different understandings of the appropriate rights and duties of male and female parents.

However, for both ancient Israel and the early church, the household was a place of belonging, authority, and spiritual continuity—a social location where the role of teaching and the preservation of faith and traditions were maintained. We believe that in the midst of ongoing significant social change, an abiding, eternal message established in Christ and based in scripture is relevant for Christian marriages and families today. We believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). We also believe that human nature remains unchanged—humankind is created in the image of God. This means that the abiding needs of human nature are ultimately answered by the abiding qualities found in Christ. And we believe that we live as brothers and sisters within God's new household and that the social location of that household is the kingdom of God.

One issue devoted to the family is only a beginning for further study and reflection. We commend to our readers what our writers have achieved. We open with a study of creation theology by **CHARME ROBARTS**. Creation theology is the basis for what defines human life and experience before God. With broad strokes Robarts reminds us of the meaning of God's power, God's goodness, and the issue of life and death. **AMY BOST HENEGAR** searches for guidance regarding marriage in the book of Hosea. She believes that Hosea contains a profound message about the character of God and the nature of God's love through the metaphor of marriage. The prophet

has a proclamation for modern marriages, even though the gender configuration in the story is difficult for modern readers to accept. **S. SCOTT BARTCHY** pursues what it means for us to be siblings in the kingdom of heaven. The vision he portrays compels us to see our mates and children through the values and themes of the gospel message. **ROBERT F. HULL JR.** carries forward our theological reflection with a fresh study of the families of flesh and the family of faith as seen in the New Testament household codes. Turning to families and the church today, **CLARENCE HIBBS** asks, Who is responsible for children's being raised in such a way that they become responsible and capable adults? In an increasingly fragmented and individualistic world, children and families need to live in strong communities—strong church communities—to prosper. **ELEANOR DANIEL** contributes two articles: the first deals with singles in the church; the second is a reading resource guide on the family. Speaking personally and with expertise, Daniel calls attention to the myths of singles in the church and challenges us to consider single adults' needs. She addresses issues that are often overlooked or misunderstood. Her reading resource guide on the family is especially helpful for ministers, teachers, and other church leaders. **LEE MAGNESS** provides another wonderful worship reading. **HENRY E. WEBB** reports on the World Convention of Churches of Christ held in Brisbane, Australia this past summer. Finally, the richness of this issue is completed in a number of book reviews, written by **ELEANOR DANIEL**, **JACK B. HOLLAND**, **BOB LAVER**, **ROBERT F. HULL JR.**, **CLIFFORD W. BERGER**, **KRYSTIN D. HIGGINS**, and **JOHN RICHTER**.

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STUART AND D'ESTA LOVE