



## A Changing Family

Adapted from “A Future for Your Family” series by Scott Erickson

Changes are happening at a rapid pace in our society. Dads have a powerful responsibility in their homes and churches. God has called them to be the main person who discipled their children in godliness. Pew Research Center gives a family something to think about long and hard:

Family life is changing. Two-parent households are on the decline in the United States as divorce, remarriage and cohabitation are on the rise. And families are smaller now, both due to the growth of single-parent households and the drop-in fertility. Not only are Americans having fewer children, but the circumstances surrounding parenthood have changed. While in the early 1960s babies typically arrived within a marriage, today fully four-in-ten births occur to women who are single or living with a non-marital partner. At the same time that family structures have transformed, so has the role of mothers in the workplace – and in the home. As more moms have entered the labor force, more have become breadwinners – in many cases, *primary* breadwinners – in their families.

As a result of these changes, there is no longer one dominant family form in the U.S. Parents today are raising their children against a backdrop of increasingly diverse and, for many, constantly evolving family forms. By contrast, in 1960, the height of the post-World War II baby boom, there was one dominant family form. At that time 73% of all children were living in a family with two married parents in their first marriage. By 1980, 61% of children were living in this type of family, and today less than half (46%) are. The declining share of children living in what is often deemed a “traditional” family has been largely supplanted by the rising shares of children living with single or cohabiting parents.

Not only has the diversity in family living arrangements increased since the early 1960s, but so has the fluidity of the family. Non-marital cohabitation and divorce, along with the prevalence of remarriage and (non-marital) recoupling in the U.S., make for family structures that in many cases continue to evolve throughout a child’s life. While in the past a child born to a married couple – as most children were – was very likely to grow up in a home with those two parents, this is much less common today, as a child’s living arrangement changes with each

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adjustment in the relationship status of their parents. For example, one study found that over a three-year period, about three-in-ten (31%) children younger than 6 had experienced a major change in their family or household structure, in the form of parental divorce, separation, marriage, cohabitation or death.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Parenting in America," December 17, 2015, 15-16, [http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2015/12/2015-12-17\\_parenting-in-america\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2015/12/2015-12-17_parenting-in-america_FINAL.pdf) (accessed July 6, 2017).

## COURAGE

**C1:** Describe your family growing up.

**C2:** Write out your dreams for your family. Include what you see as the future for your children and grandchildren.

**C3:** Fathers have a tremendous responsibility to raise their children to be healthy contributors of society. Read and answer the following.

**Deuteronomy 5:29–33 (ESV)** Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever! Go and say to them, “Return to your tents.” But you, stand here by me, and I will tell you the whole commandment and the statutes and the rules that you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land that I am giving them to possess.’ You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.

- From these verses, what are three things you grasp about a father’s responsibility when raising children?

## STRENGTH

**S1:** Describe your plan to disciple your family. Read and answer the following.

### **Deuteronomy 6:1–9 (ESV)**

- These verses are God's plan for raising your family. On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate how well your plan is compared to God's plan. Write out a 90-day plan to improve your plan.

**S2:** What do you see as challenges when it comes to discipleship and your family? What is your plan to overcome these challenges? Write it down.

**S3:** Three challenges that have been suggested we are facing include: liberalism in the church, secularism in our country, and humanism in our schools. Read and answer the following.

- In your own words, define: Liberalism, Secularism, and Humanism.
- In your own home, what impact are these three things having? Write out a plan to combat these in your home.

### **Matthew 24:9–13 (ESV)**

- Considering liberalism, secularism, and humanism, what can you glean from these scriptures?

## ENDURANCE

**E1:** God's Word is filled with fantastic promises regarding our family. Read and answer the following.

### Deuteronomy 6:1–5 (ESV)

- From these verses, what are two promises God gives for our family?
- From these verses, where do the promises begin?
- From these verses, what must your family learn to do in order to be successful?

**E2:** Your faith should go from you to your children. It is not the job of the Sunday School teacher, the Youth Pastor, or the Pastor to disciple your children. Read and answer the following.

### Deuteronomy 6:6–9 (ESV)

- From these verses, what do you glean regarding God's formula to disciple your family?
- From these verses, what are five ways you can understand God's formula to disciple your family?

**E3:** If fathers are to be the primary persons responsible for the discipleship of their children, on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate yourself on how well you disciple your family. Write out a 90-day plan to improve the discipleship in your family.