

# THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY IN CHANGING TIMES

## PREAMBLE

In the month of August our series of studies focuses on the family. The family in post-modern times is under attack. The enemy is trying to confuse people even on fundamental issues like its definition, administration and composition. Yet the idea of family is divine and fully defined and receives full counsel from God himself through his written Word. We therefore turn to the Scriptures to find guidance for the Christian family in our changing times.

STUDY ONE

WEEK OF 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY

## HOMO TECHNOLOGICUS

### Introduction:

The post-modern family is facing challenges that never existed before, right from the children to the adults. Humankind has progressed and has become *Homo Technologicus*. How can families stand these pressures and remain intact?

**Read: Romans 12:1-2**

**Observation:** (To answer these questions, please stick to the text you have read.)

1. What did the author urge the brothers to do with their bodies?
2. Why did he want them to do so?
3. What did he caution them about the world?
4. How were they to be transformed?
5. What would they achieve by doing so?

**Interpretation:** (To answer these questions, feel free to refer to other relevant passages in the Bible to make your point.)

6. What is involved in offering one's body as a living sacrifice to God?
7. Why does the passage refer to this as a spiritual act of worship?
8. What do you understand by "the pattern of this world"?
9. What happens when one conforms to the pattern of this world?

10. Have advances in technology enhanced conformation to the pattern of this world? Explain.

11. How have these technologies affected marriage and family?

**Application:**

12. How have you, as a Christian in modern times, ensured that your life is 'holy and pleasing to God'?

13. What, if anything, have you done to minimize the negative effects of technology in your family?

**Memory Verse:**

**Romans 12:2**

*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

**Romans 12:2 (NIV)**

## THE CULTURAL SCHIZOPHRENIC

[Review of Last Week's Memory Verse: Romans 12:2]

### Introduction:

As African Christians, we still carry a lot of cultural baggage that often surfaces at occasions such as naming children, conducting weddings and funerals. Cultures can be bad, neutral or good. How do families navigate their way around these without becoming "cultural schizophrenics"? A schizophrenic is one who suffers from schizophrenia, a serious mental condition in which the way the victim thinks and feels is not connected with what is really happening.

### Read: Galatians 2:11-21

**Observation:** (To answer these questions, please stick to the text you have read.)

1. Why did Paul oppose Peter in Antioch?
2. How did Peter normally relate to the Gentiles?
3. What caused him to change his behaviour?
4. Who joined Peter in his hypocrisy?
5. What did Paul do when he saw that they were acting against the truth of the Gospel?
6. Why would no one be justified by observing the Law?
7. What happens when we seek justification in Christ?

**Interpretation:** (To answer these questions, feel free to refer to other relevant passages in the Bible to make your point.)

8. Who were "the circumcision group" (v.12)?
9. Why was the arrival of Jews from Jerusalem the turning point for Peter?
10. Was Peter a victim of cultural schizophrenia or just a hypocrite?
11. Have you observed any cultural schizophrenia in our Christian weddings or funerals? Explain.

**Application:**

12. How have you responded to incidences of "cultural schizophrenia" you may have come across at weddings or funerals?

13. How have you avoided acts of "cultural schizophrenia" in your own approaches and responses to various family and social events?

**Memory Verse:**

**Galatians 2:21**

*"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing."*

**Galatians 2:21 (NIV)**

## RAISING A TRANSFORMED GENERATION

[Review of Last Week's Memory Verse: Galatians 2:21]

### Introduction:

The world is redefining what family is for us and Christians are struggling to win the battle of integrity and to influence society. What kinds of building blocks do we need that will help us raise a generation that will bring transformation in the society?

### Read: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

**Observation:** (To answer these questions, please stick to the text you have read.)

1. Who is being addressed in this passage?
2. What do we learn about the LORD?
3. What parts of their bodies were the Israelites to use to promote the commandments?
4. How were their children to know about the commandments?
5. Where else were the commandments to be written?

**Interpretation:** (To answer these questions, feel free to refer to other relevant passages in the Bible to make your point.)

6. Why was it important to point out to the Israelites that the LORD is one?
7. What does verse 5 mean to you in practical terms?
8. What commandments are being referred to in this passage?
9. To whom does verse 7 give the primary responsibility for teaching children the commandments of the LORD?
10. In your view, how would obedience to the instructions of this passage lead to a transformed generation?
11. If your country were to be transformed according to these commandments what would it be like?
12. Have any of these commands been changed in the New Testament?

**Application:**

13. What steps are you personally and/or as a group taking to teach children the commandments of the LORD?

14. What steps are you personally and/or as a group taking to raise a transformed generation?

**Memory Verse:**

**Deuteronomy 6:6-7**

*"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."*

**(NIV)**

**Deuteronomy 6:6-7**

## THE EMPTY SEAT

[Review of Last Week's Memory Verse: Deuteronomy 6:6-7]

### Introduction:

Many families sit down each evening and look at the empty seat that should have been occupied by a son, a daughter, a husband or a mother who is prodigal. How should families in pain handle their pain and reach out to the errant member?

### Read: 2 Samuel 18:1-33

**Observation:** (To answer these questions, please stick to the text you have read.)

1. How did David muster the men who were with him?
2. Who were the three commanders of the king's troops?
3. Why did the king not march out with the troops?
4. What instructions did the king give to his troops about Absalom?
5. Who were the adversaries in the forest of Ephraim?
6. How did Absalom meet his death?
7. How prepared was he for his death?
8. What did Ahimaaz son of Zadok volunteer to do?
9. Why did Absalom prefer to send a Cushite?
10. How did David respond to the news of the death of son?

**Interpretation:** (To answer these questions, feel free to refer to other relevant passages in the Bible to make your point.)

11. How appropriate is the title given to this study?
12. What should have happened at family level for this battle between father and son to be avoided?
13. Why did Joab want to eliminate the man he was ordered to protect?
14. Compare and contrast the characters of the three junior men that were involved in the spread of the news of Absalom's fate?

**Application:**

15. How often is your seat or the seat of someone in your family empty? How has this affected you or that person and the family?

16. How should you, as a Christian, handle the pain caused by an estranged member of the family - immediate or extended?

17. How best can you reach out to an estranged member of the family - immediate or extended?

**Memory Verse:**

**2 Samuel 18:5**

*"The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, 'Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.' And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders."*

**(NIV)**

**2 Samuel 18:5**