

# Whose Family Values?

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*A debate over family values has erupted in American politics. The nation cannot reach a consensus about them. Why are they so important?*

Early in the political campaign, the issue of "family values" erupted when Vice President Dan Quayle made his now-famous remark about the fictitious Murphy Brown. "It doesn't help matters," said Mr. Quayle, "when prime time TV has Murphy Brown—a character who supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid, professional woman—mocking the importance of fathers, by bearing a child alone, and calling it just another 'lifestyle choice.'"

Despite a strong initial push at the Republican National Convention, neither Republicans nor Democrats have defined "family values." Instead, politicians and celebrities have fought a media war, defending their positions and accusing each other, succeeding only in clouding this vital issue.

Dictionaries define "values" as principles or qualities intrinsically beneficial or desirable, such as standards, mores, norms, moral codes, customs, or ideals. Values are the guides we use to conduct our lives. Family values, then, are the guides, the norms and practices, by which we live in the most intimate and smallest community, the family. They are of grave importance, for they largely determine how we act and react in our larger communities—neighborhood, school, city, state, and nation. Around them, on them and because of them, character is formed.

## Recent Examples

Just when "family values" was turning into nothing more than a political cliché, we were "treated" to the spectacle of Woody Allen's alleged incest with his 19-year-old stepdaughter. Not long thereafter, the British tabloids showed the Duchess of York cavorting topless in the presence of her two small children and a man not her husband. These events fanned the smoldering issue back to life.

Another public issue further illustrates the urgent need to resolve the nature of this nation's family values. A candidate for America's highest office, Bill Clinton, has been accused of adultery and other immoralities. He meets these accusations with vague explanations that make one wonder if pathological avoidance of the plain truth is an integral part of his "moral" code. His spokespersons have publicly stated that "character should not even be an issue in this campaign"! But character is the *only* personal qualification for president addressed by the framers of the U.S. Constitution.

The same candidate has been anointed by an AIDS activist group as part of "the most pro-lesbian and pro-gay ticket in history." *Newsweek* notes that he is "the first presidential nominee to assiduously court their [homosexual] vote." In addition, he promises to "push" prophylactics in public schools. Militant homosexuals are euphoric. By this they hope to gain nothing less than the legitimacy of homosexuality, homosexual marriage and adoption by gay couples. So much for the traditional American and Canadian concept of marriage, let alone the biblical model!

Where does such moral obtuseness come from? From the world of course! Heavy blame rests on the atypical cultural circles these leaders move in. They reinforce each other's behavior as acceptable and

good despite readily available information to the contrary. They ignore the clear evidence that people reared in traditional families—with father as the breadwinner and mother using her creative energies and loving concern to prepare her children for adulthood—have a far greater chance for success in life than those reared in any other family format.

To give one example in comparison, a recent survey of 5,246 obituaries in sixteen homosexual newspapers, *excluding AIDS-related deaths*, reveals the average age of the deceased was 41 years (versus 75.4 years for the entire population). They must be living happy, well-adjusted lives dying at 41! Also, homosexuals account for 80% of all sexually transmitted diseases. What kind of family values can these people instill in society? Yet these people are being assiduously courted by a candidate for president! It certainly causes one to reflect soberly on where this nation might go with him at the helm.

### **The Importance of Family**

Mr. Quayle was correct in his complaint about Murphy Brown's portrayal of single motherhood. The single-parent family has become a major source of economic and moral deterioration in America. Overwhelmingly women, single parents are both victims and perpetrators of this country's system of values. Families headed by a single mother are six times more likely to be poor than two-parent families. And she is usually so stressed from carrying the responsibilities of both parents, her fatherless children grow up with higher rates of emotional and educational problems than their two-parent counterparts.

The family is so vitally important because it is the community in which we first learn, practice and adopt the values we will live by throughout our lives. Virtually every social scientist agrees that when the family breaks down, so does society. So no one argues that there should not be qualities our society should hold dear and strive to live up to.

No, the debate centers on whose values we should embrace. We are divided about what qualities represent the highest standards. In fact, man will go to war over them! History shows this fact to be certain: Regardless of nationality or race, our values periodically bring us into conflict with one another. In the family, divorce results. In the larger community, violence erupts only to be quashed by a dictator who imposes his values. Nations go to war, and when one side triumphs, it imposes its values on the loser.

Our people have never unanimously agreed about values, though at times in the past a more narrow range of choices was available. But as immigration from a wide variety of cultures diversified our people, rapid transportation, instant communication and war facilitated the spread of contrasting values. "Higher critics" attacked the Bible in the universities, resulting in a diminished influence of the churches. Today, such moral confusion prohibits any national consensus. How fitting is the last verse of the book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel [no central authority, no national consensus]; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Truly we live in Babylon!

### **To Get Worse Before It Gets Better**

It is sobering, even grievous, to know that over the next few years it *will* get worse. How true rings II Timothy 3:1-2: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful,

unholy." The good news is Jesus Christ is going to return and establish the government of God on earth, beginning with Israel. The values of the God Family will then be imposed. This imposition will be authoritative, but not rigidly dictatorial as man has done. Zechariah 14 indicates Egypt will have the choice of keeping God's Feast of Tabernacles. If they refuse, though, drought will follow.

Not only will His righteous values be imposed, God will not permit competition from differing codes. The confusion over what the best course is will end, and mankind will be at one with their Creator and each other.

We ought to pray every day that God will send His Son, not just so we may escape living in this world of clashing values. But pray that the burden of the entire creation can be lifted and the whole earth can sing with joy over the restitution of God's family values.