

The Family in the Bible

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The concept of family¹ is of utmost importance in the Bible. It is introduced at the very beginning of the Bible as we see in Gen 1:28: “God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’” God’s plan for creation was for men and women to marry and have children. A man and a woman would form a “one-flesh” union through marriage (Gen 2:24), and they with their children become a family, the essential part of human society. We also see in the early pages of the Bible that family members were to look after and care for one another. When God asks Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” Cain’s response was “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9). The implication is that, yes, Cain was expected to be Abel’s keeper and vice versa.

The importance of family can also be seen in the provisions of the Mosaic covenant. For example, two of the

Ten Commandments deal with maintaining the cohesiveness of the family (Ex 20:2–17; Deut 5:6–21). The fifth commandment regarding honouring parents is meant to preserve the authority of parents in family matters, and the seventh commandment prohibiting adultery protects the sanctity of marriage. From these two commandments flow all of the various other stipulations which seek to protect marriage and the family. The health of the family was so important to God that it was codified in the national covenant of Israel.

The significance given to family is not solely an Old Testament phenomenon. The New Testament also makes many of the same commandments. Jesus speaks on the sanctity of marriage and against frivolous divorce in Mt 19. Paul talks about what Christian homes should look like when he gives the twin commands of “Children, obey your parents” and “Parents, don’t provoke your children” in Eph 6:1–4 and Col 3:20–21. Furthermore, we see similar New Testament concepts regarding the importance of family in the book of Acts when on two separate occasions during Paul’s second missionary journey, entire households were baptized at the conversion of one individual (16:11–15, 16:31–33). In 1 Cor 7, the unbelieving spouse is sanctified through the believing spouse, meaning, that the unbelieving spouse is in a position to be saved through the witness of the believing spouse.

Hence, it becomes clear that family is the essential part of human society in the Bible, and as such, it should be nurtured and protected. Pope Francis also in his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, especially in its first chapter titled "In the Light of the Word" emphasizes the same. Though humankind owes much to family for its birth, growth, education, occupation, and the overall development, in the modern era, there is a deep crisis facing family life. While this crisis has got important political, social, economic, and moral ramifications, in the ultimate analysis, a return to the religious foundations will address the root causes of this crisis. The present article tries to bring out these religious foundations of family life from the biblical perspective, as the Bible promotes many of the family values.

Family: A Cluster of Terms and Types

The biblical understanding of the nature of the family is complicated by two factors. One is the historical length of time involved and the changes in cultural and social patterns within that span of time. The other is the range of terminology used for kinship relationships, most of which do not exactly mean what "family" means in the modern usage. The following discussion focuses on the three major biblical types of family and the related biblical terms.

The Smaller Family

This type of family was mostly called as "house" and it consisted of parents and their unmarried children, although

occasionally non-kin such as slaves or long-term visitors were included in it. Within such smaller families, the children were socialized by being taught the customs of their people (Prov 1:8; 6:20) and the mighty deeds of their God (Ex 10:2; Deut 4:9). During the monarchical period, each smaller family functioned as a self-sustaining economic unit, as the agricultural products grown by the family were stored in the house, and all animals that the family might own were quartered there.

The authority over the members of the family mostly belonged here to the father, who exercised legal control over his children and wife. However, his power was not absolute (Ex 21:7–11; Deut 21:15–21). With regard to the children, they were expected to honour and obey their parents, and the failure to do so was considered to be a serious matter (Ex 20:12; Deut 27:16). Marriages were very carefully regulated (Lev 18), and there were rigorous laws against adultery and incest in view of protecting the integrity of the smaller family (Ex 20:14; Lev 18:20; Deut 5:18). Nonetheless, the families could be dissolved through divorce (Deut 24:1–4). In early Israel, polygamy was common (Gen 4:19; 16:1–2), although by monarchical times it was limited primarily to the royal family.²

The Extended Family

This type of family was mostly called as “father’s house” and it was composed of all the descendants of a single living ancestor in a single lineage excluding married

daughters who entered their husbands' extended families. Thus, the extended family included the head of the house and his wife or wives, his sons and their wives, his grandsons and their wives, plus any unmarried sons or daughters in the generations below him, occasionally along with all the nonrelated dependents like the slaves and the resident labourers. The members of an extended family sometimes lived together in adjoining houses, although this does not seem to have been common, and occasionally worked at the same trade or profession (1 Chr 4:14, 21, 23).

The extended family acted as a corporate entity and was granted certain legal rights in order to maintain its solidarity. When one of its smaller families was forced to sell property, the extended family had the right to redeem the property in order to keep it from leaving the family (Lev 25:25). Individuals threatened with being sold into slavery could be redeemed by a member of their extended family, and, at least in the early period, the family was allowed to avenge a wrong done to one of its members (Lev 25:47–49). Power in the extended family was exercised by the ancestor from whom all of its constituent smaller families were descended. If this individual was not living, then questions of authority were negotiated among the heads of the smaller families.³

The Larger Family

This type of family was mostly called as “clan” or “tribe” and it consisted of several extended families. As a clan, it

was a subunit of a tribe and it traced its genealogies to a single ancestor, although often factors other than genuine consanguinity played a role in establishing a clan identity. Clan members usually lived in the same geographical area and sometimes made up an entire village (Judg 18:11–13). They had endogamous practice in order to preserve Israel's system of land tenure (Num 36:1–12). Clans may have helped to protect their members against outside attack but otherwise seem to have had a few social functions.

The family metaphor was extended beyond the clan to include the tribe. The tribes bore the names of the twelve sons of Jacob, with Joseph divided into Manasseh and Ephraim. Their varied histories are as complex as the history of emergence and settlement of Israel in Palestine itself. Although a person's tribal identity was important and in wartime the military levy was on a tribal basis, in terms of practical social impact on ordinary life, the tribe was the least significant of the circles of kinship within which one stood. Because of the large numbers of people involved in clans and tribes, it is difficult to know how effectively they functioned as social units. Although some of the power of the clans and tribes was taken away by the monarchy, the smaller and extended families seem to have survived intact throughout Israel's history.⁴

Though the biblical concept of family could be seen in the above discussed three different senses, the biblical perspectives on family organized below in the present article

are based on the smaller family rather than the extended and the larger family.

Family: An Institution built on Marriage

It is the teaching of the Bible that the life-long, loving union between the male and the female known as marriage is the primary factor that perpetuates a family (Gen 2:24). Hence, marriage is to be held in the highest esteem if an ideal family is to be promoted on earth. Though to be called a family is not merely an "I - You" relationship of the couples, but a "We" relationship, "we" meaning, the couples and their children, the conjugal relationship is the source of the family.⁵ Hence, it goes without saying that a concise presentation of the biblical teaching on marriage is in order here.

The Divine Origin and Sacredness of Marriage

According to the biblical tradition, the marital bond that unites a male and a female is of divine origin and so sacred. The book of Genesis says that it was God who made the human male and female as the masterpiece of the universe: "God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (1:27). Centuries later, Jesus reaffirmed this when he made reference to it by saying "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning made them male and female?" (Mt 19:4).

Though the biblical description of the creation of humankind is considered to be imaginative, presenting God as someone putting Adam to sleep, extracting a rib and forming it up into a woman (Gen 2:21–22), the idea is very clear that the woman is made for man and fits him and he is drawn to woman because he feels alone and unfinished without her. In other words, they are aware of one another and drawn to each other. “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Much later, Jesus confirmed this in his teaching: “The one who made them at the beginning, made them male and female and said, ‘for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’... therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mt 19:4–6). This bears witness that the marital bond on earth is not merely a human agreement between two consenting individuals, rather it is a relationship divinely intended, and so a divinely instituted covenant.⁶

The Intimacy and Sexual Union of Marriage

The Bible also holds that marriage is the most intimate of all human relationships. This intimacy entails the establishment of a new kinship between two unrelated individuals. It is true that the marital intimacy is more than sex. It can take diverse forms like spiritual intimacy, intellectual intimacy, emotional intimacy, recreational intimacy, physical intimacy etc. However, sexual union,

which is one among the expressions of physical intimacy, and which is God-ordained and God-given, is given due attention in the Bible (Gen 1:28). The sexual relation is properly expressed only in marriage between a husband and wife, and any sexual contact between unmarried people is sinful since it violates God's design (1 Cor 7:2-3). In this, the marital sex can bring glory to God as it is experienced in fulfilment of God's design and purpose to provide intimacy, companionship, and procreation, as means of fulfilling the command of God to fill the earth.

Furthermore, Christ makes the mutual surrender of husband and wife in the union of their bodies as a sign of something still greater, namely, his own union with the church. This is to say that the husband's love, which urges him to become one with his wife, is a sign of Christ's love urging him to become one with us. Since Paul found, in this way, a close connection between human marriage and Christ's union with the church, he wrote: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church" (Eph 5:25-29). If sex and its use were not good and blessed by God, then the marital love could have never been shown as a sacred sign of Christ's love for us, and Christ's love for us could have never been presented as a model of marital love. Hence, sex, used according to the commandments of

the nature's author, is a good and wholesome reality of life.⁷

The Exclusiveness and Fidelity of Marriage

In continuation with what is said above on intimacy and sexual union, the biblical position that marriage is exclusive and so infidelity in marriage is an offence against God is to be stressed here. This means that no other human relationship must interfere with the marriage commitment between husband and wife. This could be illustrated well in the case of Joseph who had his Egyptian wife Asenath and their two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen 41:50–52). Joseph was a good family man and a faithful husband. There came up a test for his marital fidelity by the Egyptian Potiphar's wife, who was struck by Joseph's handsome features and asked him to share a bed with her. Joseph's answer was stern: "Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen 39:8–9). But Potiphar's wife did not listen to Joseph and kept trying to get him to do what she wanted. When she realized that he would not change his mind, her desire turned to spite and she accused Joseph to her husband as if he tried to seduce her. As a result, Joseph was thrown in jail. Even then, Joseph did not give in to that temptation.

If at all he had given in to the suggestion of Potiphar's wife, it would have been a slap on the face of God, the author of marriage.

On this point, St. Paul goes one step further that he makes husband and wife to be mutually responsible not only for their own fidelity, but by their way of life for the fidelity of the other person: "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:3-5).⁸

The Permanence and Divorce of Marriage

Having discussed the exclusiveness and fidelity of the marital partners, the biblical teaching on the permanence of marriage and divorce comes next. Marriage is intended to be permanent, since it was established by God (Mt 19:6; Mk 10:9). However, situations arose in which divorce was permitted in ancient Israel. A husband could divorce his wife—not a wife her husband—for "something objectionable" that he found in her (Deut 24:1-4). Rabbi Shammai, who was quite rigorous in his interpretation of the Torah, interpreted this "something objectionable" as unfaithfulness

on the part of the wife. Whereas, Rabbi Hillel, who was quite liberal in his views, interpreted it as matters like lack of beauty, incompetence in cooking, barrenness etc. Probably in line with Rabbi Shammai, Jesus and Paul too allowed divorce only on the ground of unchastity on the part of the wife (Mt 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor 7:10–11). But Paul sanctioned one more instance of divorce i.e., Pauline privilege—the unbelieving spouse’s refusal to continue the marriage (1 Cor 7:12–15).

However, the law of divorce found in Deut 24:1–4 is not so much a law about divorce itself or the conditions on which it might happen, rather it is a kind of regulation for the protection of the woman when a divorce takes place. According to that, she must be first given a certificate of divorce, so that she could not be accused of adultery if she married again, nor could her second husband be so accused. Followed to that, she could not be taken back by the original husband once she had married another, so that she could not be degradingly treated as a sexual object. Though the law thus permitted divorce, it was not taken lightly in the Bible. Malachi’s denunciation of divorce as something Yahweh “hates” is to be stressed here (2:13–16). The same could be said of the high view of marriage that is part of the ethical content of Job’s self-defense (31:1, 9–12). Even more inspiring is the portrait of the joys of sexual love and fulfilment in the Song of Songs, and the exalted evaluation of a good wife in Proverbs (31:10–31).⁹

The Shortcomings and Disruption of Marriage

The Bible also records at least three human shortcomings which disrupt God's vision of marriage: polygamy, adultery, and same-sex union.

Polygamy violates God's instituted pattern of marital monogamy as envisioned in Gen 2:18-25. However, several prominent men in Israel's history such as Abraham, Esau, Jacob, Gideon, Elkannah, David, Solomon and still others engaged in polygamy. This resulted in disruptive favouritism, jealousy between competing wives, and decline into idolatry.

With regard to adultery, the Decalogue stipulated explicitly, "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18; 2 Sam 11). Proverbs calls adultery both foolish and dangerous and so, one who commits adultery has no sense, and he destroys himself (2:16-19; 5:3-22; 6:32-33; 7:5-23; 9:13-18). The Bible moreover uses adultery often as an analogy to depict the spiritual unfaithfulness of God's chosen people Israel (Jer 3:8-9; Ezek 16:32, 38; Hos 1:1-3:5).

Finally, same-sex union is considered by the Bible to be violating the divine will for marriage that should take place between one man and one woman. It is heterosexual union which is the divine arrangement for marriage (Gen 1:28). Hence, same-sex union is outside of God's order for life. On this point, there is no ambiguity (1 Cor 6:9-10; Rom 1:22-27).¹⁰

Family: A Network of Roles and Responsibilities

The institution of family that is born out of marriage has got a network of roles and responsibilities played by its members. The Bible records these roles and responsibilities at different levels. Among them, the functions of four significant categories i.e., the father, the mother, the son, and the daughter are synthesized below. These functions are defined by custom and, to a degree, enforced by the codes of law.

The Father

The father was the head of the family. Needless to say, he begot children and was expected to feed them (Mt 7:9–11), as well as nurture and protect them (Deut 1:31; Hos 11:1–3). It was the father's duty, moreover, to instruct his sons in social expectations of the village and family (Prov 1:8; 4:1; 23:22) and to discipline and chastise them in the instructions of the Lord (Heb 12:5–9; Prov 3:11–12; Eph 6:4). Besides redeeming his first born (Ex 13:13), the father ensured that his sons were circumcised into the covenant (Gen 21:4; Lev 12:3). He should not let his daughters be seduced (Lev 19:29; Ex 21:7), but must defend their honour (Deut 22:13–21). The father had the right to arrange the marriages of his sons and daughters, although it appears that in Israel the wishes of the contracting parties were not disregarded (Isaac and Rebekah – Gen 24; Caleb and Achsah – Judg 1:12–15; Amnon and Tamar – 2 Sam 13:13).

The father is exhorted not to provoke his children, lest they may lose heart (Col 3:21). His compassion for his children is used to describe the divine mercy (Ps 103:13; Lk 16:24). His religious position appears in the patriarchal stories, where he offers sacrifices for the family (Gen 12:7; 26:25). He possessed the power of life and death over his children. Abraham who was prepared to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen 22), the father who had the right to sell his daughter into slavery (Ex 21:7) are examples in this regard. The lists of household duties in Eph 5:21–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1 and 1 Pet 2:13–3:7 encapsulate the rights of fathers: “Children obey your parents.” Admitting their duty to discipline their children, the same lists warn fathers not to be too strict (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21).¹¹

The Mother

In the patriarchal societies of biblical times, the mother played an important but secondary role in the family. She, although having the primary function of giving birth to the children, had got considerable authority over the family’s life (Sarah directing Abraham to cast out Hagar to which he complied – Gen 21:10). The mother exhibits love and care for the members of the family especially children. She does not forget the children she had borne.

To quote a few examples for a mother’s love for her children, Sarah protects her son Isaac’s place as the heir of God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 21:10). Rebekah secures

Isaac's blessing for her favoured son Jacob (Gen 27:10). Moses' mother risks her well-being to keep her son safe from the Egyptians who would kill him (Ex 2:1-3). King David's wife Bathsheba intercedes with her husband to secure his throne for her son Solomon (1 Kings 1:17). The mother of Zebedee's sons asks Jesus to allow her sons to sit on either side of him when he comes into God's reign (Mt 20:20-21). Examples like these are many in the Bible. The prophet speaks of the comfort that a mother gives to her children as indicative of the compassion of Israel's God (Isa 66:13); while the psalmist emphasizes a mother's care by declaring that if it ceases, the Lord will provide what he lacks (Ps 27:10).

Among a mother's virtues are strength and dignity, wisdom and kindness. She is industrious, providing her household with food and clothing (Prov 31:10-31). The mother disciplines her children. She is concerned for their code of behaviour and for their relation to God. If she is the mother of a king, she may well influence the affairs of the state even (1 Kings 1:11-37). Despite the patriarchal culture in which men were valued more than women, several laws indicate that mothers and fathers received equal treatment with respect to their children. For example, children were to honour their mother (as well as their father - Ex 20:12). A person who struck his mother (or his father - Ex 21:15) or cursed his mother (or his father - Ex 21:17) would be put to death (Deut 7:16).¹²

The Son

The life of a father is continued in his son. A major ingredient in a father's feeling that his life on earth has fulfilled its purpose is the presence of a son to perpetuate his lineage (Gen 15:2-4). Hence, institutions such as polygamy, levirate marriage, and even adoption were established in the Bible in order to save a father's life on earth. A son was to inherit the property of his father. In particular, the first son inherits a double portion of all that his father has (Deut 21:17). For this reason, the tenants of Jesus' parable attempt to kill the heir in order to take his inheritance (Mt 21:38; Mk 12:7; Lk 20:14). If the father was too old to care for his family, the first son took his father's responsibility and exercised authority over the household. Such a system of "fratriarchy" can be seen in the case in which Laban acted as the head of family with regard to the marriage of his sister Rebekah in Gen 24. It is probably with the acceptance of such a system that the Israelite women called the (grand)son of Naomi born to Ruth as "a restorer of life and a nourisher of old age" (Ruth 4:14).

The Bible values a worthy son very highly. Proverbs gives us the glimpse that a wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is mother's grief (Prov 10:1; 15:20; 17:25). In the Bible, sons are viewed as the symbol of the father's might or strength. Jacob calls Reuben, his firstborn, "my might and the first fruit of my vigor" (Gen 49:3). Sons are

to be disciplined and carefully trained in the traditions of the community and in the meaning of wisdom (Deut 8:5; Prov 3:12; 13:24). Moreover, a son is advised to honour his parents (Sir 7:27).¹³

The Daughter

Women in Scripture are nearly always identified as the daughter of their father (Gen 19; Ex 2:5). A daughter depends on a parent's provision, and with a few exceptions, a daughter is treasured by her parents. Jephthah mourns the vow that dooms his daughter (Judg 11:35); Job's beautiful daughters are given an inheritance (Job 42:15); Jairus and the Syrophenician woman frantically beseech Jesus on behalf of their daughters (Mt 15:22; Mk 5:23). Commonly parents prioritize a daughter's safety. The prophets typify a daughter as "tender and delicate" (Isa 47:1) and as "a joy of all the earth" (Lam 2:15). A virgin daughter is considered vulnerable, and any violation of her is a calamity (Lam 2:13).

Along with sons, daughters are often expected to reap the benefits of their parents' righteousness (Ezek 14:20). At times a daughter's future hinges on her parents' desires or needs: Lot and the Benjaminite offer their daughters to strange men (Gen 19:1–11; Judg 19); Michal becomes David's wife as a battle reward from Saul (1 Sam 18:20–30); Herodias' daughter is made to dance before Herod (Mk 6:14–29). A daughter receives an inheritance, good or bad, from her parents. A daughter determines the honour of her

parents by her action. Though not responsible to carry on the family name, daughters participate in the advancement of their father's name by behaving with dignity, preserving their purity until a suitable marriage can be arranged.¹⁴

Family: A Fraternity that celebrates Love

The biblical family that has got a network of roles and responsibilities is also considered to be a space and environment where the love between its members grows steadily and is manifested vividly. In other words, many families in the Bible lived as a fraternity that celebrated love. The warm love lived between different members of the family is the source of some of the deepest happiness available to humankind. Among them, the significance of the love lived between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and different in-laws is discussed below with certain examples.

Love between Husband and Wife

The love between a husband and wife is expressed through mutual companionship. This idea is introduced in the story of the creation of Eve. Adam needed a companion, a suitable helper, yet one could not be found until God created Eve (Gen 2:20–24). This also leads them to another expression of their love that is complementarity. God created men and women with natural, physical, and emotional differences. Usually where one is weak, the other is strong. Therefore, a husband and wife complement each

other in love by meeting the other person's needs through physical and emotional intimacy (1 Cor 7:2–3). Similarly, the conjugal love makes the couples to work together as a team to develop and grow as a family. God's plan was that every home operate under the specific roles of both a husband and a wife and that through this they raise healthy children who honour God with their lives.¹⁵

Among many biblical couples who lived the above mentioned biblical objectives of marital love, a few are quoted below:

(i) *Jacob and Rachel*: While many love stories are great, this one always stands out. Jacob worked for seven years at his uncle Laban's home in search of Rachel to be his wife. At the end of seven years, when he had been deceived into marrying Leah, he was prepared to work for another seven years in order to get Rachel as he loved her the most (Gen 29).

(ii) *Elkanah and Hannah*: Elkanah had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. While Peninnah had children, Hannah did not. Despite the fact that her womb was closed, Elkanah loved her very much. In a society in which having sons was of great importance, Elkanah loved Hannah saying, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" Knowing the thoughts and the fears that Hannah struggled with, Elkanah put his needs aside to offer her words of assurance and love (1 Sam 1).

(iii) *Nabal and Abigail*: Nabal, Abigail's husband, was uncouth, worldly-minded, miserly, and a drunkard. But Abigail's love to her husband Nabal is well-known. When Nabal and the whole family was hunted after on account of Nabal's disobedience to David, Abigail, without her husband's knowledge, prepared the food supplies for which David had asked, and she gave them to him. David was satisfied with the supplier. He sent her home with his promise not to harm her husband. How could Abigail do this? The answer is simple that her true love for her husband did not see or minimized the faults of her husband whom she had loved very much (1 Sam 25).

Love between Parents and Children

Genuine love of the parents for their children, and of the children for their parents is characteristic of many of the biblical families. Love which is concerned about and provides for the integral welfare of the other is the genuine love. In this way, in many of the biblical families, we see parents caring for their children and vice versa. Parents express their love for their children by feeding them (Mt 7:9-11), and by nurturing and protecting them (Deut 1:31; Hos 11:1-3). Parents also teach their children the truth about God's Word, as an expression of their love for them: "Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise" (Deut 6:6-7). These verses

emphasize that there is an ongoing mission on the side of the parents in instructing their children. Moreover, disciplining the children is also an integral part of parents' love for the children. Proverbs 13:24 says, "Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them." At the same time, discipline must be balanced with love, or else, children may grow up resentful and rebellious (Col 3:21). From the side of the children, they are also advised to listen to their parents in order to show their love for them: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord...so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Eph 6:1–3). The children are also expected to care for their parents especially when they are old. If not, it would be a lack of appreciation for what their parents did for them and that would be equal to the denial of their faith even (1 Tim 5:4, 8, 16).¹⁶

Among many biblical families which could be quoted as examples for parent-children relationship, a few are referred below:

(i) *The family of Abraham*: Abraham's family is a good example in this respect. Abraham and Sarah greatly loved Isaac as he was their only begotten and given to them in their old age by the favor of God. Abraham and Sarah were very much anxious about Isaac's welfare. That is why Abraham sent his servant to the country in upper Mesopotamian to find a bride for Isaac. Abraham did not want to take a girl from one of the Canaanite families among

whom he lived, because that would be dangerous to the faith of their son. Isaac also endeared himself to his parents still more, by the exercise of every virtue, and adhering to his duty to his parents, and being zealous in the worship of God. Even when God's command to offer him—though for testing the faith of Abraham—was finally revealed to Isaac, he demonstrated extraordinary obedience to his father (Gen 18–22).

(ii) *The family of Jesse*: David was born into the illustrious family of Jesse, who was a prosperous farmer and who could afford to send gifts to Saul (1 Sam 16:20). David was the youngest in the family, which included seven other brothers. Many of the great talents and qualities which assisted David in attaining the tremendous achievements of his lifetime were certainly inherited from his parents. They would have taught him fortitude and courage to face his adversaries, humanness and magnanimity to value the dignity of every individual. David also loved his parents very much. He was a very obedient son to his parents (1 Sam 17:17–20). Moreover, the Bible records a very remarkable incident to show the love of David to his parents. It was David's arrangement with the king of Moab to care for his parents until his fortunes took a turn for the better, as he was fleeing to different places as a political fugitive to escape from the hostility of Saul (1 Sam 22:3–4).¹⁷

(iii) *The family of Tobit*: Tobit's family is another appropriate example for the relationship between parents

and children. Tobit and Anna loved their son Tobias very much. As a result of their love for the son, Tobit gave many valuable instructions to Tobias: “My son, when I die, give me a proper burial. Honour your mother and do not abandon her all the days of her life... Revere the Lord all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live up rightly all the days of your life, and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing” (Tob 4:3–5). When Tobias delayed returning back from his mission, the parents were in extreme anxiety. On his return, on behalf of both, Anna threw her arms around him and welcomed him. Tobias also cared for his parents throughout their lives (Tob 10–14).

Love between Brothers and Sisters

Siblings are mentioned throughout the Bible. Some of these siblings are very inspiring as they express love towards their brothers and sisters as a natural thing. They responded gracefully in the face of their siblings’ difference of opinion and went out of the way to treat the other with kindness and to serve them. This shall be explained by the following examples:

(i) *Moses, Aaron, and Miriam*: The siblings Moses, Aaron, and Miriam constituted together a powerful leadership team that dealt successfully with the trials of a forty-year journey in the wilderness. Though there came up at times a difference of opinion among them, especially with regard to the mixed marriage Moses had contracted (Num 12:1–

16), mostly each covered for the shortcomings of the other, and together they succeeded in guiding the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. Moses as a legislator, Aaron as a peacemaker, and Miriam as a spiritual leader complemented a three-way partnership. The innate love found in the hearts of these siblings kept them marching forward towards a common ideal of bringing liberation for the oppressed Israelites.

(ii) *Martha, Mary, and Lazarus*: Jesus was at ease with the siblings Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Their home, at Bethany just outside Jerusalem, might have been considered by Jesus as home away from home. Though their personalities and perspectives differed at times, especially when Martha grew impatient over Mary, as she was seated at the feet of Jesus without helping her (Lk 10:38–42), Jesus felt a deep affinity for all the three. The siblings also loved each other very much. This is clearly seen by the act of both the sisters sending word to Jesus to come and heal Lazarus, when he was detrimentally ill (Jn 11:1–3). Also when Lazarus had died later on, the sisters were deeply saddened by the loss of their brother. Martha said to Jesus in anguish, “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died,” and this was also later repeated by Mary to Jesus (Jn 11:21, 32).

Love between In-Laws

The Bible makes note of several supportive in-law relationships in which one treats the other with love and

kindness. Among them, an example each for father-in-law/son-in-law and mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship is discussed below:

(i) *Jethro and Moses*: These two characters are a significant example for father-in-law and son-in-law relationship. Jethro, also known as Reuel, was a Kenite shepherd and a priest of Midian. Moses married Jethro's daughter Zipporah and had two sons through her (Ex 2:21). Jethro cared for his son-in-law Moses very much. Later on, while leading the Israelites to Canaan, Moses met Jethro in the wilderness and he bowed down and kissed Jethro. Each asked after the welfare of the other. Jethro gave to Moses useful advices on how to govern the people of Isreal, especially by appointing trustworthy men as officers and judges over the people. Jethro did everything to Moses without guile (Ex 18).

(ii) *Naomi and Ruth*: Any discussion on family in the Bible will be incomplete without mentioning the family of Naomi and Ruth. This is an inspiring family with regard to the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. The mother-in-law Naomi loved her daughter-in-law Ruth as her own daughter seeking to make her happy at all costs. She was ready to sacrifice her company by remaining in the land of Moab in order to get married again after the demise of her son. Later on, she skilfully arranged everything in such a way that she got Ruth married to a man called Boaz and thus rejoiced in making her daughter-

in-law's life happy. In the same way, the daughter-in-law of Naomi, Ruth, was also equally exemplary. She considered Naomi as her own mother and loved her as such. Naomi and Ruth lived in mutual confidence and trust. Ruth did not do anything without the knowledge of her mother-in-law. They had no secret between themselves (Ruth 1-4).

Family: A Cradle that nurtures Human Values

The family in the Bible in which love functions as the elixir of life also serves as the first and foremost place where human values are instilled in the hearts of its members. All the values essential to lead a meaningful life are practised and learnt in the families. Parents play a significant role in imparting these values to their children. Among different values practised in the families of the Bible, freedom, justice, labour, forgiveness, and hospitality are discussed below with relevant examples of the families which practised them.

Freedom

The parents need to use their authority to shape their child. Their influence, instruction, and correction all work together to form a good child. However, discipline doesn't mean stifling a child's free will. On the contrary, a child needs to be able to have opinions and allowed to express them with freedom. In this regard, there is a good example in the Bible in which parents respected the freedom of their daughter and allowed her to decide for herself. It

was in the family of Bethuel, whose daughter Rebecca was destined by God's providence to become Isaac's wife. When the servant of Abraham wanted to get back home with Rebecca, her parents were very reluctant to let her go with him. But when they called Rebecca and understood from her that she wanted to go right away to her future husband's home, they made no further objection. They blessed her and sent her with the man (Gen 24). Parents who really love their children need to respect the freedom of their children, while giving proper guidance to them to choose the right path.

Justice

Justice is so important to the biblical God that it is a consistent theme throughout the Bible. Prophet Isaiah says that the Lord loves justice, and hates robbery and wrongdoing (Isa 61:8), as "the Lord is a God of justice" (Isa 30:18). Moses had already instructed the Israelites regarding justice in the following way: "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you" (Deut 16:20). The sages and the psalmists said, "to do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice" (Prov 21:3), and "happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times" (Ps 106:3). This biblical ideal of justice was no more the agenda of the religious circle alone, rather it was taught to the children by the parents in a familial context too. Tobit instructed to his son Tobias

in the following way: "Revere the Lord all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live up rightly [do justice] all the days of your life, and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing" (Tob 4:5).

Labour

The biblical family also serves as a forum in which the dignity of human labour is learnt and appreciated by its members. In Ps 128, where the context of a family is described, the father appears as a labourer who had understood the value of human labour and who by the work of his hands sustains the physical well-being and tranquility of his family: "You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you" (v. 2). Proverbs presents the labour of a mother within a family; her daily work is described in detail as winning the praise of her husband and children (31:10-31). Paul was so convinced of the necessity of work that he laid down a strict rule for his communities: "Anyone unwilling to work should not eat" (2 Thess 3:10; 1 Thess 4:11).

Forgiveness

The spirit of forgiveness is an indispensable factor for the stability of a family. This is well brought out in the case of Hosea's family. Hosea married Gomer, who was the object of his deep love, but a harlot. They had three children. Sometime in the course of their married life, Gomer began running after other men, and so left Hosea. But Hosea loved her in spite of what she was doing to him, and wanted

her back. Finally Gomer realized how she had deceived herself to run away from a fine person like Hosea. As a result, she rediscovered her love for him and went back to him. After a period of test of her love for him, he accepted her back. There is no mention made here of Hosea's sense of honour. His sense of honour was fully overpowered by his indestructible love for Gomer. His love urged him to forgive her and to accept her back (Hos 1-2). The readiness to forgiveness in the family as found in the case of Hosea and Gomer is an indispensable factor for the survival of a family.

Hospitality

Genesis 24 that was already discussed for the exercise of freedom at the family is also an ideal text that favours the practice of hospitality at the family. The warm welcome rendered by the family of Bethuel to Abraham's servant draws our attention here. When Abraham's servant came to the public well outside the city of Nahor, Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel, came there to draw water. The servant asked her for a drink. She gladly gave it and said: "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking" (v. 19). Then he asked her if there was room in her house for him to spend the night. She told him that they had plenty of food also for the animals, and place to spend the night. When Rebecca went and told her parents and her brother Laban about the visitor, her brother ran out to meet him and welcomed him to their home saying:

“Come in, O blessed of the Lord. Why do you stand outside when I have prepared the house and a place for the camels?” (v. 31). So the man came into the house. In this way, the family of Bethuel became a model family that practised hospitality.

Family: An Union that encounters Crises with Courage

The biblical family that nurtures various human values is also an union that faces different forms of crisis. In other words, family in the Bible is not exempted from critical and stressful situations; on the contrary, it encounters the presence of pain, evil, and violence that at times break up the communion and love of the family. However, there were positive initiatives taken by the members of the families in order to deal with the crises courageously and to regain the smooth functioning of the families. Among different crises faced by the families in the Bible, relationship, financial, and health crises and the efforts taken by the families to deal with them are discussed below with pertinent examples.¹⁸

Relationship Crisis

Every relationship involves expectations. When expectations are not well managed, then negative emotions emerge and lead the relationship into a crisis. Numerous pages of the Bible beginning with Cain’s murder of his brother Abel, disputes between the sons and wives of the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the tragedies and

violence marking the family of David etc., bear witness for different kinds of relationship crisis. Among them, how it was managed by Jacob's sons Joseph and his brothers is more apt to be mentioned here. Joseph was despised by his brothers because of their father Jacob's overt favouritism towards him as he was born of his old age. Hence, his brothers plotted against him, threw him in an empty well, and later sold him as a slave to some traveling Midianites. This could have turned to a very big sibling rivalry. But in the course of time, when Joseph had attained high position in Egypt, and during when his brothers came to him seeking provision to escape the famine, and later when they begged for his forgiveness, revenge was the last thing in the mind of Joseph. He did all that was good to them and by that paved way for restoring the relationship (Gen 37-50). Realization of one's mistakes, asking for forgiveness, generosity in rendering pardon are all significant tools in dealing with the relationship crisis in a family.

Financial Crisis

The family in the Bible at times undergoes severe economic hardships, lack of material resources, and struggle for subsistence. The family of the widow of Zarephath reminds us of such an extreme financial crisis. Famine in the land had emaciated the widow and her boy, now they had come to their last meal. Once this was eaten, there would be nothing to do but throw their haggard, fleshless bodies on the bed and await their release from

suffering—the terrible death of starvation. But all such trial was past, when God multiplied her handful of meal and cruse of oil (1 Kgs 17:8–24). This “powerful act” reported here is a cumulative expression of all biblical convictions regarding the well-being of those in financial crisis. They are to remember that the Lord is their refuge, deliverer, and provider (Pss 14:6; 34:6; 40:17), the rich are not to oppress the poor, as it is against one’s Maker (Prov 14:31; 17:5), and the poor are paralleled to the godly and upright (Prov 37:14). Such biblical convictions empower the families in financial crisis to fight against their plight.¹⁹

Health Crisis

Number of families in the Bible encounter health crisis. In the gospels we see the families of the following persons to be undergoing a health crisis: the sick mother-in-law of Peter (Mk 1:30–31), the epileptic son’s father who came to Jesus asking to heal his son (Mk 9:17–27), the demon-possessed daughter’s mother who was a gentile and who came to Jesus pleading for healing her daughter (Mt 15:21–28), the official at Capernaum who came to Jesus with the request of healing his son (Jn 4:43–54) etc. In such situations, these families make positive efforts in order to deal with the crises they encountered. First of all, they believed in the prayer of the psalmist that God is the great physician and the master healer (Ps 91:1–4). And so, “he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more” (Rev 21:4).

However, they did not stop with that belief alone, rather they also ensured that the sick people get proper medication on earth by the help of different healers available (2 Kings 5:1–19; Lk 5:18–25; Acts 3:1–10).

Family: A Confederation Committed to Service

The family in the Bible that encounters various forms of crises with courage is also a confederation that is committed to service. It involves itself in varied forms of service like serving at the sanctuary of the Lord, proclaiming the Gospel, building up of the communities, extending solidarity with the poor, promoting the common good, transforming the unjust social structures, protecting the creation etc. These different forms of service are broadly classified here into three categories i.e., service to God, humanity, and nature. All these three categories will be discussed below with appropriate examples. It is true that the service to God, humanity, and nature are not three isolated sections, rather very much interconnected among themselves, one reflecting the other. Hence, the distinction done here has only got a superficial value, but at the deeper level, one has got within itself the other dimensions too.

Service to God

The final chapter in the book of Joshua speaks about covenant-keeping families. There in his address to the people, Joshua says, “Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the

gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:14–15). This text favours the position that the family of Joshua was committed to the service of the Lord. Although the names of Joshua's wife and children are not mentioned in the Bible, we can conclude that they were all covenant-keepers, prepared to serve the Lord. Serving the Lord meant different things to Joshua and to his family: the equitable distribution of the land to all tribes so that they all will have access to the means of production (Josh 13–21), making people live in the land with peace and prosperity and without any external threat (Josh 9:1–10:43), instructing people that belonging to God's own people is not subject to racial or ethnic issues, but bound up to the stipulations of the covenant (Josh 2:1–24; 9:1–27) etc.

Service to Humanity

The holy family of Nazareth was the family par excellence that was committed to the cause of the humanity. Jesus, the son in the holy family, served the humanity both through his words and deeds. His mission was to reach out to the poor, to deliver the captives, to restore sight to the blind, and to lift up the downtrodden (Lk 4:16–21). For the sake of this mission, he mingled freely

with all those who were in the bottom rungs of the social ladder, and gave them confidence and courage. He befriended sinners, tax collectors, and those afflicted by diseases, and confronted the Pharisees and the Scribes. His parables proclaimed the kingdom of God to everyone but with a preferential option for the poor. Every action of Jesus thus became a sign of the kingdom that he came to establish here on earth. Similarly, Mary, the mother in the holy family, too was committed to the service of the humanity. Her initiative at the wedding feast of Cana (Jn 2:1–11), willingness to help the elderly Elizabeth (Lk 1:39–56), readiness to devote her only son for the sake of God’s kingdom, prove her commitment to the humanity. In the same way, Joseph, the father in the holy family, was also an example of total self-surrender to God and God’s people. As a result, the Bible pays him the highest compliment: he was a “righteous” man (Mt 1:19).²⁰

Service to Nature

The creation accounts in the book of Genesis speak about the commandment given by God to humankind—indirectly referring here to the family of Adam and Eve—with regard to the care of nature: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen 1:28; see also 2:15). These commandments of “subduing” and “having dominion over” were not given to the first parents

for an unbridled exploitation of nature through domineering and destructive activities. Rather, they were given to them with the sense of caring, protecting, overseeing, and preserving. In other words, they imply a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Hence, all can take from the bounty of the earth whatever they need for subsistence, but they also have the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. The first biblical family of Adam and Eve that made this care of earth as its concern, sets a model for all families today to care for our common home, earth.²¹

Family: A Praying and Believing Community

The biblical family that serves as a confederation committed to service is also a praying and believing community. Prayer is often described as communication, communion, or dialogue with God. In other words, through prayer, one experiences intimacy with God. This intimacy with God, to be a relevant one, should necessarily result in interpersonal and social commitment. Hence, prayer can't stop creating a closeness to God alone, rather it needs to strengthen the human cohesiveness and commitment too. While thinking in this line, we see that the biblical families, which are nourished by the culture of prayer, develop a communion with God and a fellowship with the members of their families, and the society at large. The following discussion elaborates on this thought with appropriate examples.²²

Biblical Family Prayers

Apart from many spontaneous personal and community prayers found in the Bible (Ex 3:4–4:17; Josh 7:7–9; Judg 5:2–31; 1 Sam 2:1–10; Pss 8; 19:2–7 etc.), the Jews and the early Christians recited certain fixed prayers which could be termed as “Biblical family prayers,” as they were based on the Bible, and were recited by the members of the same families at their homes among themselves, and at synagogues and temple along with others. In this regard, two prayers could be mentioned with regard to the Jews: (i) *Shema Yisrael* (“Hear, O Israel”), a title coined from the first two words of the prayer. In its entirety, this prayer addresses Judaist monotheism and it consists of three biblical texts: Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21; and Num 15:37–41. It was recited twice a day: morning and evening. (ii) *Shemoneh Esrei* (“Eighteen Benedictions”), a title given to a set of Bible based benedictions divided into three general types: praise, petitions, and thanks. It was recited thrice a day: morning, afternoon, and evening. All Jewish men and boys from their twelfth birthday onwards were expected to recite these prayers regularly. With regard to the early Christians, the Lord’s Prayer that was taught by Jesus to his disciples, a prayer that included first three petitions concerning God’s praise and final four regarding human needs, could be mentioned here (Mt 6:9–13; Lk 11:1–4).²³ This prayer indeed appears to be a simplified version and a Christian alternative to the Jewish Eighteen Benedictions, as every phrase in it practically appears in the latter.

Praying Biblical Families

Since prayer was considered to be essential for a wholesome family life, it was exercised by many families in the Bible.²⁴ Among them, two groups of families are discussed below:

(i) *Liberated Exodus Families*: The families which were part of the Exodus group celebrated the Passover festival at the beginning of their Exodus journey in Egypt and when they got settled in Canaan. This Passover festival was a family celebration, and it was celebrated with great enthusiasm. It was a celebration in commemoration of their liberation from Egyptian slavery. This festival, in addition to all other gaiety and fanfare, was certainly an occasion of family prayer during when they recalled all mighty deeds done by Yahweh in the history on behalf of the oppressed. Through this prayer, they deepened their belief in God and strengthened the unity in their families (Ex 12:2-11, 25-27; Num 9:1-5; Deut 16:1-8).

(ii) *Early Christian Families*: The families which were part of the early Christian community devoted themselves for the following four activities: listening to the apostles' teaching, exercising fellowship among themselves, celebrating the breaking of the bread, and praying together (Acts 2:42). Interestingly, these spiritual and communitarian practices were carried out not always at the temple, but also at homes (Acts 2:46). In this way, the families became the places of prayer in which people could

express their belief in God, strengthen their community solidarity as God's people, and above all nourish their familial unity.

Conclusion

The different aspects of the family in the Bible were until now discussed. Now by way of concluding, it could be said that the family in the Bible has got its origin in marriage and it is the cradle of life and love where people are born and grow. It is a place where people can be themselves with full freedom and accepted for what they are. Not everyone out there can imagine life without a family. Barring a few individuals, for most people, the family becomes an integral part of their lives which plays a vital role in shaping their personalities. It is because, before all others, it is the family that teaches moral values to people and passes on to them the spiritual and cultural heritages of the society.

Moreover, family is a source of encouragement when the people are surrounded by problems. Despite all the odds, family takes care of the wellbeing of the people, and try its best to provide them care. It helps people survive through tough times and brings joy into their lives. It protects the dignity of the people and ensures that their lives move ahead steadily. During hard times, everyone in the family benefits due to the extended relationship. Also, the joy associated with any happy moment is magnified when the family is around.

Finally, in the biblical family, man and woman though different in their being, have got equal dignity and equal rights, as both of them are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). Hence, anything that violates the equality between man and woman is to be challenged and opposed. To achieve this goal, love that would seek the happiness of the other should unite the members of a family. In order to achieve this goal, every family should become a praying and a witnessing community. The family that prays together stays together.

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Endnotes

¹ The Latin root *familia* is a collective noun coming from *famulus*, "slave, servant," and that which, from the etymological point of view, constitutes the family is the whole of the *famuli*, the servants who live in the same house. But in the common parlance, family is the unit of those connected by kinship. Cf. E. Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 291-92; C. D. Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages: A Contribution to the History of Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 133-34, 1316-18.

² Cf. Robert R. Wilson, "Family," *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 302.

³ Cf. C. J. H. Wright, "Family," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:762.

⁴ Cf. Wilson, "Family," 302-03; Wright, "Family," 2:761-62.

⁵ Cf. E. John Kulandai, *The Perfect Triangle: Towards the Spirituality of the Indian Family* (Nagercoil: Nanjil Offset Printers, 1995), 5-6.

⁶ Cf. Matthew Vellanickal, "Family Life in the Bible," *Bible Bhashyam* 3/3 (1977): 193.

⁷ Cf. Matt Slick, "What is the Biblical Purpose of Sex?" n.p. [cited 5 July 2017]. Online: <https://carm.org/biblical-purpose-of-sex>.

⁸ Cf. Vellanickal, "Family Life," 194.

⁹ Cf. K. Luke, "The Family in the Traditions of the Bible," *The Living Word* 106/3 (2000): 139–140; Wright, "Family," 766.

¹⁰ Cf. Joseph Pamplany, "'This is a Great Mystery...' (Eph 5:32): The Concept of Family in the Bible," *Word & Worship* 47/2 (2014): 319–320.

¹¹ Cf. O. J. Baab, "Family," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, 2:239.

¹² Cf. Baab, "Family," 2:239.

¹³ Cf. L. D. Hawk, "Son," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 4:570–71.

¹⁴ Cf. Leland Ryken et al., eds., "Daughter," *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery: An Encyclopedic Exploration of the Images, Symbols, Motifs, Metaphors, Figures of Speech and Literary Patterns of the Bible*: 193–94.

¹⁵ Cf. E. G. Romanes and A. G. MacLeod, "Family," *Dictionary of the Bible*: 292.

¹⁶ Cf. Peter Alphonse, "The Role of Catholic Parents in the Education of Faith of their Children with Special Reference to Catholic Documents," *Sprout* 11/1 (2014): 33–45.

¹⁷ Cf. David T. Tsumura, "Family in the Historical Books," in *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs, Culture, and Context* (eds. Richards S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 75.

¹⁸ In this connection, to read more about the pastoral challenges faced by the families today, see, Synod of Bishops: Third

Extraordinary General Assembly, *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization: Instrumentum Laboris* (Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2014), 62–103.

¹⁹ In dealing with this, to read more about managing the family finances today, see, VeronVaz and Yolande Pereira, *Creating a Happy Family through Successful Marriage and Effective Parenting* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2005), 140–49.

²⁰ Cf. Xavier Kidangean, “The Biblical Perspective on Family,” *Bible Bhashyam* XX/3 (1994): 214–15.

²¹ Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’*: On Care for our Common Home (24 May 2015), (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2015), 48–49.

²² Cf. Timothy A. Lenchak, “Prayer: Old Testament,” *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 756–60; Kidangean, “Family,” 213–16.

²³ Cf. John J. Parsons, “The Shema – Hear, O Israel!” n.p. [cited 30 July 2017]. Online: http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/The_Shema/the_shema.html; Vellanickal, “Family Life,” 207–09; Matthew Vellanickal, “The Christian Righteousness,” *Bible Bhashyam* X (1984): 113–20.

²⁴ For a detailed reading on family spirituality, see, Janet K. Ruffing, “Embodied Family Spirituality,” in, Proceedings of the Seminar for Bishops Chairmen: Commission for the Family in the Countries of Asia, titled, *The Family and Contemporary Social Reality: Pastoral Priorities and Challenges* (Chennai: Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture, 1999), 122–33.

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