

Considering Children

Couples that are contemplating starting a family will be confronted with a materialistic and leisure-focused culture that tends to dwell on the challenges more than the joys of parenthood. Couples today tend to worry about the effect kids will have on their education, career and lifestyle more than past generations did. As a result, they are often encouraged to push family off a little longer while enjoying the perceived freedom of life before children.

What couples can lose sight of during such a cost/benefit analysis are the grand and often mysterious purposes God has for children within marriage. Even the Christian community can lack vision for just how central the efforts of starting and raising a family are to God's plan for our lives. That's why it is important to ask yourself several pertinent questions.

QUESTION ONE: Are Children Part of Your Life's Purpose?

"Be fruitful and multiply" was the first charge God gave His creation in the garden. While each of us have distinct strengths, passions and experiences that guide what we do in life, marriage and parenting are a general calling that applies to most people of faith. And while having children isn't the only purpose for marriage, it is very closely tied to God's original design for marriage and should not be discarded without serious, prayerful reflection.

When we bear and raise children we cooperate with God's desire for a "Godly seed" (Malachi 2:15). Parenting is also the primary way most of us fulfill the call to lay our lives down for others (Philippians 2:4-8). Producing and guiding the next generation is a mission that stretches us and pushes us to depend on God like few other things in life, all the while revealing and shaping our larger purpose within God's plan for humanity.

QUESTION TWO: Are Children a Blessing or a Burden?

In the past few years, social commentators have used words like "ankle biters" and "yard apes" to describe children and the stress they bring with them. But God calls children a blessing (Psalm 127:3-5). Even in the face of what one writer called the "bone-wearying work" of parenting, children provide the joyful reward of marital and parental love. Studies consistently find children are people's greatest source of happiness.

QUESTION THREE: How Long Should You Wait?

Magazine covers featuring celebrities having babies well into their forties can give couples the impression they have plenty of time to start their families. Unfortunately, those images have contributed to a tragically low awareness of the fertility window God designed for women. Couples today who marry in their late twenties and then spend a couple of years getting to know each other are often surprised to find that they are already pushing past their prime fertility season when they start thinking about having kids.

QUESTION FOUR: Who is Your Provider?

Couples seeking to start their families may feel overwhelmed by a variety of concerns about being pregnant, giving birth and adjusting their marriage, budget and lifestyles. This can be a natural response because babies do change everything and push couples beyond themselves. But God is faithful. Paul told the Corinthians, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). Having children is a good work and gives couples new opportunities to see how God is able to supply what they need.

GOING FURTHER - Resources

Recommended Website: The "Having a Baby" topic on *TroubledWith.com* provides encouragement and insights about making the transition from just the two of you to a "three-family." It includes practical advice for the pregnant season as well as information about what life will be like once the baby arrives.

Recommended Book: *Start Your Family* (by Steve & Candice Watters) provides inspiration for those considering children and practical insights from his and her perspectives.

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