

7 ESSENTIALS FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM – Part 5

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We live in a “niche” world where “targeting” is fast becoming the way to reach people. We live in a “computerized” world that is “complex” and “informed.” These were the focus of our first four articles. It is also important for us to understand that we live in a “cold” world.

Consider, for example, that while most of us take it for granted that homes and people around us are just like ourselves...the truth is that 30% of children in America will be born into single parent homes. 40% will live in a single parent family before they're grown. 50% of children conceived are conceived to a single mom. By next year (2000) the divorce rate is projected to be 67%.

Do you ever wonder about the growing number of parents who will not discipline their children? You think it could have something to do with the fact that over half of all women will be physically or sexually abused? We're dealing with people all around us who have trouble understanding passages like Heb. 12:7ff on God's love and discipline because they have many of the same feelings as Martin Luther who viewed father-love from the standpoint of being an abused child. The picture of a loving Father as Jesus presented in Matt. 7:9-11 is foreign to these people.

Once again then, we're living in a “cold” world. People are becoming more and more “damaged goods.” Hearts are becoming hard and trust is difficult to come by. It's ironic that in an age that focuses so much on “feeling” things, it is hurt feelings that cause so much trouble. In an age of instantaneous global communication, interpersonal communication has not gotten one bit easier.

What is the answer? People are looking for real, warm, accepting, loving families. Ephesians 2:19 teaches that the church is God's family. We must do two things then. Number one – we must preserve it. God's family can be torn asunder just like any other family and we must do all in our power to preserve it in peace and strength and unity. If we cannot develop a spirit of love and forbearance with each other, then we really have no business expecting others to want to join with us or for God to welcome us “home” someday.

Number two – we must present the family relationship that is in the church to the world around us. We must tell them and point them and lead them to the Father they never knew, the tenderness and forgiveness of an elder brother, and the acceptance of brothers and sisters who struggle just like they do. I truly believe the world is looking for love, and security, and discipline, and guidance, and training. All these things are found in a proper family relationship and the family of God ought to have them too.

In a cold world, once again, the gospel has the answer.

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