



June 1993

Dear Friends,

I bring you good news about the family this month. Interesting things are happening within the culture that may have long-term implications for the institutions of marriage and parenthood. To explain what we're seeing, we need to go back to May 1992, when the flap over "family values" erupted in the media.

It started, more or less, with Vice President Dan Quayle's speech on the family and his two-minute criticism of the "Murphy Brown" television show. Commentators and comedians went into a frenzy of ridicule and disdain. How could anybody be so stupid as to allege that two-parent families should be preserved, or that single parents often have a tough time? Quayle's words were distorted to appear hostile or disrespectful of those in "nontraditional" families. He said no such thing, of course, but I can still hear David Letterman mocking the Vice President and ridiculing historic understandings of morality.

As the campaign heated up, the forces of hell were unleashed against intact families and the principles on which they are based. The word "hate" became the buzzword of the year. It was hung on anyone who believed in what became known sarcastically as "traditional values." Colorado was dubbed the "hate state" for denying special rights to homosexuals, and bumper stickers proclaimed, "Hate Is Not a Family Value." It was, perhaps, the low point in the 25-year struggle to preserve the fundamental unit of society.

That barrage of propaganda is still with us, of course. Hollywood producer Rob Reiner (he played "Meathead" on the old TV comedy series "All in the Family") recently said this about "sanctimonious" Christians: "They get these people all twisted around with ideas about how morality should be. How about just be decent to the other guy, huh? You know, if they really believed in anything, if they really believed in what they are now preaching, if they really believed in what Jesus Christ said, they wouldn't be promoting family values."¹

Then there was the unbelievable statement made recently by the "entertainer" who calls himself Ice-T. He is the rapper who suggested in his album *Cop Killer* that police should be murdered. That was last year. Now he's at it again. On February 22, 1993, he talked to Stanford University law students about the riots that shook Los Angeles last year. That was, he said, "the happiest day of my entire life." He continued, "During the riot, I rolled into the neighborhood. I was chilling out, signing autographs. It was the most peaceful time I had ever been in South Central Los Angeles. Brothers were dancing. Music was playing. It was a very great thing."²

The "very great thing" of which Ice-T spoke resulted in 53 deaths, 2,400 injuries, 1,400 stores looted and burned, more than \$1 billion in property damage, and incalculable emotional distress to the children and adults living in South Central Los Angeles.³ One of the saddest victims was Wally Tope, 53, a street minister who sought only to share the gospel with anyone who would listen. Wally was there with Bible in hand during the riots. He pleaded with looters to go home, but they turned and knocked him to the ground. Then they beat him unmercifully. Mr. Tope is still in the hospital a year

later. We are told that there is very little hope he'll ever come out of the coma.⁴ This happened, said Ice-T, in the aftermath of "the happiest day of my entire life."

I suppose there will always be shrill voices in society spouting hatred and extolling violence. Perhaps if we knew the pain and suffering experienced in childhood by people like Ice-T, we might better understand their anger. Nevertheless, they are in a position to do great damage to society—and especially to today's young adults. MTV recently editorialized, "Ice-T is just a happy man. He's giving out a good message." Yeah, right!

But let's get back to the "good news" of which I spoke. What appears to be occurring now is a shift in attitudes toward family values. No one can be certain just how widespread the awakening is, but we are seeing evidence of a definite revitalization. For one thing, we have been receiving large volumes of mail and telephone calls from people who have never contacted us before. They are encouraging us to hang tough—to not become discouraged. For example, the day I read my March letter on the air, something unprecedented happened. Prior to that time, the most responses we had ever received following a single broadcast was about 5,100 telephone calls. That day, however, 13,000 people tried to reach us. More than 140 operators were working just as fast as they could to take the calls. Almost with one voice, thousands of people phoned to say, "We're with you! Don't give up! We're praying for you and the work you're trying to do."

Two weeks later we aired a broadcast entitled "Women in Combat." In the next two days, nearly 50,000 people called Focus on the Family! Obviously, something dramatic is happening among our constituency.

Needless to say, we can't judge an entire culture by the people who contact Focus on the Family. But there are other evidences of a move back toward the traditional family. And surprisingly, it is occurring not only among pastors or Christian activists but also within academia and the press. The intelligentsia is apparently coming to the same conclusion, at last, that some of us drew 25 years ago: the family is in serious trouble and **must** not be allowed to die!

For the first time, a significant number of articles and editorials spell out the dangers now facing our families. Social scientists and journalists are especially concerned about what we are doing to our children. Some of them have even addressed the spiritual decline that lies at the core of our troubles. One of the best was written by Walter E. Williams, a professor of economics at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. His message will encourage you:

No matter how you cut it, our most serious national problems stem from an abandonment of traditional standards of morality. Despite what the liberal elite would have us believe, there are moral absolutes, and there's right and wrong. Some behavior is good, and some is wicked. Whether you're a Christian, Jew or atheist, certain behaviors are to be encouraged, while others are to be scorned and condemned. Let's look at it.

Traditionally, we've condemned both teenage sex and bearing children without the benefit of marriage. There's good reason. Teenagers have neither the means nor the maturity to raise children. Liberal values that comfort and sanction bastardy have produced disastrous results. The poverty rate of traditional, two-parent, intact families is one-sixth that of nontraditional families. In nontraditional families, child abuse is 40 times higher, and children are three times as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems.

Congress plays a major role in the breakup of the traditional family. For most of our history, the average father's earnings provided for the family. The reason is simple: the average earner paid little or no taxes. Now because of federal and state income taxes, a man earning \$30,000 a year has an after-tax income of a bit over \$20,000. This tax bite forces some wives

into abandoning young ones just to make ends meet. All of this was done by stealth. Had the 1945 income-tax deduction for children kept pace with congressionally caused inflation, the average worker would pay little or no income taxes.

Government schools have also contributed to undermining traditional values. Whether it's a decline in discipline, a fall in standards or bait-and-switch sex-education programs teaching youngsters that anything goes provided you start out with a condom, our schools have led the way in undermining traditional values. If you pay \$23,000 and your kid goes on to elite universities like Stanford, he may have access to "Safe Sex Explorer's Action-Packed Starter Kit Handbook," a manual that advises, "Mutual masturbation is great—but watch out for cuts on hands and raw genitals . . . Use condoms for (sex) with several partners. Always clean up and change rubbers before going from one person to another."

There are good reasons why the elite and the liberal press attack what they derisively call the religious right and the "Ozzie and Harriet" family. They attack religion for the identical reason the communists attack it. Religion is about moral absolutes. There is no equivocation about its routine condemnation of fornication, adultery and homosexuality, stealing, lying and cheating. Religion says children should be loyal to and obedient to parents. Parents have a responsibility to their children. Bums, derelicts and hobos have become our society's mascots, but religion has always condemned slothful behavior.

Pretend you're a liberal whose agenda calls for people's allegiance to be first and foremost to government. You want open sex and any kind of lifestyle. You want a nanny government that confiscates the earnings of one American and gives them to another to whom they do not belong. What institutions challenge your agenda and stand in your way? You've got it: families and religion.

Even our financial problems like the federal deficit and debt are rooted in immorality. After all, thrift, deferred gratification and living within one's means are moral values as well. To revitalize our nation, we don't need more of Washington's wicked agenda. We need a moral reawakening.⁵

What insight! Nothing short of a "moral reawakening" will pull us back from the precipice. Pray with us that God will draw the hearts of men and women to Himself as in days of old. My father died with that prayer on his lips. Perhaps you and I will live to see it come to pass.

The second editorial I want to share was published in *U.S. News and World Report*, April 12, 1993, by Mortimer B. Zuckerman, editor-in-chief. An article like this one, entitled "The Crisis of the Kids," would not have been likely only one year ago.

It has been fashionable to glorify the trend toward single-parent families resulting from high divorce rates and unmarried child-bearing. One million kids a year now watch their parents split up, and a like number are born out of wedlock.

This selfish rationalization substitutes the happiness of the adult in our moral codes for the well-being of the children. Career and self-fulfillment have got ahead of caring responsibility. The results on children have been devastating. The developing child needs love, stability, constancy, harmony and permanency in family life. These needs have been casuistically sacrificed in the adult's quest for freedom, independence and choice.

The mantra should be this: Marriage matters.

Children in single-parent families are six times as likely as children in two-parent families to be poor; two to three times as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems; more likely to drop out of school and to be expelled or suspended from school; more likely to get pregnant as teenagers, and more likely to use drugs and to be in trouble with the law.

The impact that family disintegration has on children's lives is a national crisis that has weakened our social fabric and placed unbearable burdens on schools, courts, prisons and the welfare system. The nuclear family must be nurtured. It must be at the center, not the periphery, of social policy. Too many policies and attitudes undermine this central value.

We are what Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan calls a post-marital society without historical precedent to guide us. No governmental policy that we know of can guarantee a reversal of this dangerous trend. But we need not stand idly by. We should enforce stricter compliance with child-support orders, expand the earned-income tax credit and improve the availability, affordability and quality of child-care services. And we should discard the assumption that it is somehow unfair to use welfare benefits as an incentive to encourage poor people to marry or discourage poor women from having illegitimate children. Most fundamental of all, we should fight the idea that the family is irrelevant. The time for silence on these issues is behind us.⁶

Can you imagine the editor of one of our major news magazines calling for the specific measures listed in Zuckerman's final paragraph? Although I might quarrel with one or two of his suggestions, it is most encouraging that he recognizes the need to protect the family's financial base. That certainly will not happen if current federal tax proposals are implemented! I hope you will help us fight them tooth and nail.

Finally, here is another syndicated editorial appearing in newspapers across the United States on March 18, 1993. It was written by John Rosemond, a family psychologist in private practice in North Carolina. This article is entitled "Parental Changes Cause Demise of Family."⁷

For the past 30 years, the American family has been "changing," or so the media informs us. The subliminal impression created is that some natural, inexorable evolutionary process is behind the steady increase in single-parent and two income-earner families. Further, that the only problem is the failure of society and government to make sufficiently rapid and effective adjustments to this new set of circumstances.

Here's the truth: For more than a generation, the American family has been in a steady state of decline, precipitated by social experiments and forces which are fundamentally at odds with a general state of family health.

Here's another undeniable truth: The American family worked better when there was a parent in the home during the day. In past generations, that parent was almost always female, but gender is irrelevant to the purpose of our discussion. That all-but-constant adult presence provided for greater family stability, smoother internal transitions, more effective overall time-management, better supervision and care of children, and more efficient delegation of responsibilities, not to mention a lower level of stress.

The comfortable division of labor between homemaker and breadwinner was more conducive to a sense of partnership and, therefore, tended to support marriage-centeredness. For all these reasons, the American family of previous generations was a more psychologically

secure place in which to live. This despite the efforts of a significant number of “helping professionals” to convince us that most of us were raised in “dysfunctional” families lorded over by parents who were abusive in one way or another.

The neo-feminist movement, one of the social experiments in question, has succeeded at convincing significant numbers of women (and men) that there is no incompatibility whatsoever between career pursuit and childrearing.

Reading a recent interview with a married professional woman who has two children, ages 3 and 7 months, I came across the following statement: “It took eight weeks maternity leave with my first child, six with my second. I could have taken longer, but in my profession, that’s not looked upon favorably.”

Excuse me? You have children and you put them in day care as quickly as you can (six weeks!) because you might be put on the “mommy track” if you don’t? What are children, anyway? Hobbies?

This woman was actually presented as a role model—living proof that it matters not whether children are taken care of during the day by parents or total strangers. What matters is that women do it all!

The “superwoman” of that interview represents a society that’s had the wool pulled over its eyes. She embodies the myth that there are no consequences to a child who has parents who try to have their cake and eat it, too. In part because personal sacrifice has come to be viewed as just shy of degrading, we have become a nation of families in various states of fragmentation, families in which priorities have been inverted. Everyone’s in a hurry, and psychological resources are stretched to the limit. Families that don’t fit this description are regarded almost suspiciously.

The American family is changing? That’s a nice way of putting it.

See what I mean by the pro-family perspectives now appearing in the press? Last month, I referred to the outstanding article in the April issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, entitled “Dan Quayle Was Right.”⁸ Indeed, he was. If space permitted, I could provide dozens of other evidences that something encouraging is going on. (By the way, I understand the article in *Atlantic* received more reader response than anything published by the magazine in its history.)

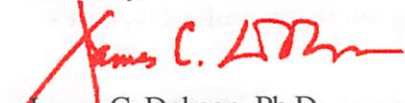
But why, we might ask, are people outside the usual pro-family movement singing our tune? Because the facts speak for themselves and they are undeniable. Families have been bludgeoned for more than two decades, and now society is paying the penalty. Cities cannot hire enough police to protect their citizens. There is no more space in prisons to house the criminals. SAT scores continue to drop in the schools. Violence plagues the world of the young, and gangs like the Spur Posse at a Southern California high school turn sexual intercourse into a disease-infested game. Something is terribly wrong. Everyone can see it. The great social experiment of the left has been a disaster, and that fact is beginning to be understood throughout society.

Nevertheless, the battle is far from over. We are still confronted by formidable foes. The shock troops of the liberal community, such as People for the American Way, the ACLU, homosexual and lesbian activists, Planned Parenthood and the entertainment industry, are well-funded, highly motivated and blessed with friends in very influential places. But the vast majority of our citizenry has not adopted their revolutionary agenda, choosing instead policies based on morals and ethics.

Stay with us, dear friends. The tide may be turning. As Winston Churchill told the British people after their successful campaign in Africa, "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. It is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."⁹ That's where we are in the long and grueling struggle. Keep praying. And keep believing . . . because . . . "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

I'll leave you this month with this additional word of encouragement from the Apostle Paul: "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (I Corinthians 15:58).

Sincerely,



James C. Dobson, Ph.D.
President

Afterthought

Shortly after I had written the preceding letter, *Time* magazine devoted its cover story to a topic entitled "Kids, Sex and Values" (May 24, 1993). Although not written the way I would have hoped, this article represented the first time a major news magazine has examined the mess we have made of adolescent sexuality. It focused on the confusion teenagers experience today and the mixed messages that bombard them in school and within the culture.¹⁰

" . . . some experts are worried," said *Time*, "that what the sexual revolution has really done for teenage girls is push them into doing things they may not really want to do."

Included in the cover story was a sidebar entitled "Making the Case for Abstinence." It discussed sex education programs that promote the message, "sex outside marriage is just plain wrong." Given the kind of media bias we have seen on this topic, this almost-objective article represented a crack in the wall of the "safe-sex" propaganda. Ten years from now, I believe, the entire superstructure of the "safe-sex" philosophy will have collapsed as the epidemic of sexually transmitted disease, including AIDS, wreaks death and suffering on peoples of the world.

There is growing evidence that parents are not willing to sit and wait for that catastrophe to befall their kids. In New York City, they banded together to secure the firing of school chancellor Joseph Fernandez, primarily because of his determination to distribute condoms to students and teach them about homosexual lifestyles through the "Children of the Rainbow" curriculum. Then they worked tirelessly to elect more conservative members to the school boards. *Newsweek* reporter Kenneth Woodward (who almost always supports the ultra-liberal agenda) covered the story in the May 17, 1993, issue. He titled his article "The Sound of Empty Barrels," referring disrespectfully to the ineffective effort by conservative parents to influence the election. Woodward's subtitle stakes out his position: "In the schools wars, the bullets are mostly blank."¹¹ Nothing disturbs left-wing radicals more than a grass roots uprising in favor of religious or conservative values.

Well, the election returns have come in since Woodward's article was published. Let's see if his disdain for conservative parents was warranted:

- (1) Of the 130 candidates who took pro-family stances on the issues, 66 were elected.
 - 12 out of 14 pro-family candidates in Bronx districts 8 and 9 were elected.
 - In Manhattan, three out of the five pro-family candidates in three ultra-liberal districts were elected.
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- (2) 12.5 percent of the eligible voters participated in the election—the most for a school board election in two decades!
 - (3) The top vote-getter in her district was Mary Cummins, grandmother and head of Queens district 24. She led the battle against “Children of the Rainbow.” Cummins received three times more votes than any other candidate.
 - (4) Of the 32 community school boards citywide,
 - 10 now have pro-family majorities, up from three before the election.
 - About two-thirds of the boards now have solid pro-family minorities on them, up from about one-third before the election.

Empty barrels, indeed!

Other parents and students are fighting the safe-sex nonsense on a different front. The Baptist Sunday School Board has launched a campaign for sexual abstinence among its teenagers. Their goal is to recruit 100,000 adolescents who will make a promise to God that they will remain moral until they marry. This commitment will be made at home with their parents, and then they'll sign a covenant to be shared with church leaders. Finally, 100,000 (or more!) covenants will be encased in acrylic holders that will cover a large field outside the convention center in Orlando, Fla.

Congratulations to these courageous young people, and to the Southern Baptist movement. It is my understanding that many other denominations are considering the same program. May God bless the effort!

Endnotes

1. “Between a Rock and a Reiner Stand a Few Other Guys,” Robert W. Welkos, *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1992, Calendar, p. 21.
2. “Ice-T Tells it Like He Is to Stanford Law Students,” Richard C. Paddock, *Los Angeles Times*, February 22, 1993, p. F2.
3. “Los Angeles Marks Riots Anniversary with Prayers, Lawsuits,” Michael Miller, *The Reuter Library Report*, April 29, 1993.
4. “Evangelist Lived His Ideals Even Amid Great Danger,” Regina Spencer Sipple, *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1992, J3.
5. “Moral Relativists Squirm in the Light of Absolute Truths,” Walter E. Williams, *Gazette Telegraph*, April 9, 1993, p. B11.
6. “The Crisis of the Kids,” Mortimer B. Zuckerman, *U.S. News & World Report*, April 12, 1993, p. 72.
7. “Parental Changes Cause Demise of Family,” John Rosemond, *Albuquerque Journal*, March 18, 1993.
8. “Dan Quayle Was Right,” Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1993, pp. 47-84.
9. *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, Oxford University Press, United States, 1979, p. 150.
10. “How Should We Teach Our Children About Sex?” Nancy Gibbs, *Time*, May 24, 1993, pp. 60-66.
11. “The Sound of Empty Barrels,” Kenneth L. Woodward, Donna Foote & Jane Tanner, *Newsweek*, May 17, 1993, p. 62.

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