

# How Do You Define 'Family'?

By KATHERINE SCHULTEN

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*Is your definition of a "normal family" a married mother and father and their biological children living together under one roof? If not, what do you think a "family" is — or **can be**? Do you think a new definition of family is starting to emerge in our society? If so, how do you see that in your own life or community? If not, why not? What experiences do you have with alternative family structures in general?*

In "A 'Normal' Family", Lisa Belkin writes about a new study that shows attitudes are changing:

What is a "family"? Statistically, it is no longer a mother, a father and their biological children living together under one roof (**and certainly not** with Dad going off to work and Mom staying home).

Although perception and acceptance often lag behind reality, there is evidence that a new definition of family — while far from universally accepted — is emerging.

A report this month by the Pew Research Center asked 2,691 randomly chosen adults whether seven trends were "good, bad or of no consequence to society." The trends were:

- *more unmarried couples raising children*
- *more gay and lesbian couples raising children*
- *more single women having children without a male partner to help raise them*
- *more people living together without getting married*
- *more mothers of young children working outside the home*
- *...etc.*

Tell us how you define "family" and why. Do you think a new definition of family is starting to emerge in our society? If so, how do you see that in your own life or community?

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**Maria** April 20, 2015 · 11:44 am

Family can be really close friends that you know or that you tell everything to. A new definition of family is evolving in our society. I see all my really close friends as family.

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**Gandalf** April 20, 2015 · 11:50 am

The word family means someone who you can trust. Someone that you put before yourself. Some times those you'd be willing to take a bullet for. I do think that the definition of family has changed over the years. I think that it has become more socially acceptable to label and define those who wouldn't be considered that 50-70 years ago whether that be due to a different race or gender, or age.

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**Tori Z** April 20, 2015 · 11:50 am

A family is group of different people who love you and you love them too like mom and dad. They always take good care of you. Because they all love you. I think there 's a new definition of family is starting to emerge in our society. Because my friends become one of my family members too.

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**Beverly** April 20, 2015 · 12:14 pm

The way I define family is thinking about how close we are. Because I think people who always make my heart feel warm is family. Also those who treat me as a family member. In some cases, we have to spend more time at school, so the friends and the teachers at school are more like our family members. It depends. It can mean those who in our daily life we communicate with .....others who are outside our natural families.

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**Lin** April 20, 2015 · 12:36 pm

A relationship as close friends, like my family, who can help me solve problems and share their happiness.

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**Matt** April 20, 2015 · 2:10 pm

Family can be very close friends that you are not afraid to share personal things with or who you have a connection with.

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...etc.

**QUESTION for church:**

1. Does this re-defining of family work to destroy the reason why God created family in the first place? If so, how?
2. Starting at the beginning of this article, what are the first words that should cause a Christian to immediately suspect "foul play"?
3. Do you think this societal "herding" in a direction completely counter to the Biblical model is an accident or a deliberate influence of satan on our society?
4. In what ways do you believe you have witnessed the average Christian home being affected by this re-defining of the family, its structure and functions?
5. Are all the result of this type of redefining ALWAYS negative?
6. Just because good CAN come from evil, does that require us to reexamine the truth of what God has ordained and called good?
7. If this cultural redefining is the work of satan, what specifically do you think he has in mind by re-defining "family"?
8. How does it work to further his agenda or work to counter God's agenda of establishing His kingdom here on earth?

9. What exactly DOES the Bible say about the topics in the bulleted list above?
10. Is what the Bible says about these things culturally derived or influenced or are they mandates God established for the purposes of His kingdom and the revealing of his character?
11. Is it okay to dismiss these commands?
12. Are there Biblical examples where ...at times or under certain circumstances...these restrictions are able to be suspended or ignored?
13. If those cases DO exist, what might or should be done by the local church to make it easier to keep the biblical mandates?
14. Do any of these, create a check in your own heart?
  - a. Do they challenge some assumptions you have made?
  - b. Do they challenge some allowances you've made for yourself or loved ones?
    - i. If so, did you know why you sidestepped or have made an excuse for not keeping a biblical mandate? If so, was it to "keep peace" instead of being a Peace maker in your family?
  - c. When we choose to ignore rather than approach a loved one concerning breaking biblical mandates can we claim we really love them?
  - d. Can honoring man above God EVER yield good fruit?
  - e. Can honoring man above God EVER FAIL to exist as leaven in your life? (Meaning will that one act of dishonor stay isolated in your life or will it ALWAYS grow and claim more of you – enticing you to freely dishonor Him in other areas as well?)