

The Concurrently Companion



Episode 45: Population decline and God's design for family

Topic introduction

In the September 23, 2023, issue of WORLD, “When in Rome” by Chiara Lamberti examines the declining birthrates in her home country of Italy, suggesting that the heart of the problem is the cultural attitude toward family. It’s a pressing issue in westernized countries around the globe.

Key terms: *birth rate, population decline, fertility, sacrifice, delayed gratification, individualism, self-actualization*

Questions for understanding and self-examination

What do you observe in secular culture right now regarding the idea of starting a family (getting married) and having children and when to do so—if at all?

What makes a biblical worldview perspective on human flourishing, educational pursuits, career fulfilment, and child bearing and rearing stand apart from secular “wisdom” on the same ideas? Why is having children a priority to people who subscribe to a biblical worldview?

What has caused governments of westernized countries to wake up and recognize the declining birth rate? What are the other characteristics of this now urgent situation in Italy? When did the decline begin? Compare and contrast with other countries experiencing declining birth rate. What are the common factors? What are the differences?

What do you observe in the women and men around you, in terms of what they feel is their life’s purpose? Is parenting an individual project? Explain.

What does human flourishing look like when it doesn’t involve children, though they’re wanted?

What is the purpose of the parenting relationship, in Christ? How does parenting serve as a model for our calling as followers of Christ? What should characterize our love for one another?

Who are your children’s role models? What are their attitudes towards marriage and family?

Food for thought: “Everything in our process as human beings is [primarily] about a deepening relationship with the Lord. . . . If we’re going to try to keep things right way round, the outpouring of everything we do is an outpouring of that primary relationship.”

Family activities and discussion questions

What does it take for a society or a culture to flourish? What does math tell us (numerically) about what it takes for a population to sustain itself or expand? What numbers reflect decline?

Kelsey used these questions as ways to help us order our thinking: “Do we live to eat or do we eat to live? Do we work in order to live or do we live to work?” How could we apply that to the individual? The family? An entire civilization? How does that help us think about our life’s purpose, under heaven? Consider reading through Ecclesiastes as a family for the encouragement it brings for living in the messy tension of the “already but not yet.”

Where in scripture do we see the Father’s design for human flourishing and for families (include in your thinking the “family of God”: His church)? [Side note: What is the Father’s attitude towards those who struggle to have or cannot have children? Where do we see that in scripture?]

Chiara mentions trying to be the “king” or “queen” of your own life. Explain this idea. She also speaks of God’s good plan for us. Name at least 10 good things related to His plan for families.

With what type of love has Christ loved us? Read 1 John 3:16-20 as a family. What does this teach us about evangelism? What does this mean for families? For the church?

Scriptural anchors/provision

For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. . . But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. — 1 Corinthians 1:25 and 28

“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.” — Matthew 18:3-5

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 19:14

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