



## Teaching God's plan for love and marriage

**WHO:** Larry and Linda McAuley, retired missionaries who served in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique for 35 years.

**WHAT:** A course on Christian Family and Marriage using a book developed by African pastors, *A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa*.

**WHERE/WHEN:** All Nations College in Thika, Kenya. June 11-14, 2018.

**WHAT WE TAUGHT:** The course on Christian Marriage and Family is solidly Bible-based. We wanted to elevate the sanctity of marriage in the African culture by emphasizing the strong points of traditional African values in marriage and family, supporting those values from Scripture, and challenging cultural practices that are contrary to God's Word.

**WHY IT MATTERS:** The family is the building block in every culture. If the family is strong, there is a strong foundation for the whole of society. Broadly speaking, the African family is under attack by

outside influences (through social media, the Internet, entertainment), by Satan's attacks, and simply by the changes that happen in any culture over time.

Many people are moving to the cities and away from their traditional homes, where they had support of the extended family and the whole community.

Western education and ideas are impacting the way people think, act and relate to each other.

Learning how to live and love in families in God-honoring ways will strengthen the families of the leaders who took part in the course and should prepare them to teach their church members to build their families on the foundation of God's Word.

We covered choosing a partner, engagement, the wedding ceremony, living and loving together after God's pattern, raising children and many other related topics.

We hope and pray that those who attended will pass along what they learned to others.

They were left with an assignment to conduct a marriage enrichment seminar, preach a series of sermons on Biblical marriage and family, have adult classes on the topic, or pass the material along in some other way.

**WHAT WE LEARNED:** Conducting this training reminded us that we, too, must continue living and loving in our own marriage in a God-honoring way.

A couple of things really stood out for us: It's far easier for a wife to submit to a husband who loves her as Christ loves the church and gave himself up for her. To love his wife as Christ loves the church means that a man must not look at his wife as an object but regard her tenderly as one made in the image of God, worthy of respect and genuine agape love.



## On God, giving and government

A significant overhaul of the US tax system took effect Jan. 1, and taxpayers and charitable organizations are discovering the implications of those changes. For married couples filing jointly, the new tax law nearly doubles the standard deduction from \$12,700 to \$24,000 and for singles from \$6,350 to \$12,000. With the dramatic increase in the standard deduction, itemizing deductions will be less attractive to taxpayers. This leaves many wondering how Christian ministries will be impacted.

Some taxpayers itemize their charitable contributions to Christian ministries as deductions from their taxable income in order to lower the amount of taxes they must pay. But now, with the increased standard deduction, some taxpayers may not feel as much of an incentive to make charitable contributions because they can deduct more automatically through the standard deduction.

Under the higher standard deduction, some economists predict that the 30 percent of taxpayers who itemize could drop to 5 percent. However, the increase in the standard deduction may also leave some taxpayers with more disposable income, which they could use to sustain or even increase their charitable donations.

So what's the bottom line for Christians under the new US tax law? If you give to your church, to ITEM, and to other ministries because you believe

God calls and enables you to give, because you are investing for the blessing of eternal returns, and because you believe God is working through these ministries for His kingdom, then nothing will change. If those are the reasons you give, a change in the nitty gritty rules of itemization won't matter.

Earthly governments and laws won't change God's eternal truths or His ability to work for, in, and through His people. As Jesus once said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

## Prayer Requests

- Praise for Larry and Linda McAuley, who taught in June in Kenya on marriage and family.
- Praise for Mark Vander Hart, who taught Old Testament at Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary in Latvia in June.
- Pray for John van Schepen, who will be teaching "The Coming Kingdom" and "Living in Grace" in Bolivia July 23-27.
- Pray for John Lewis, who will be teaching on the Book of Acts in Bangalore and Chennai in India July 30-Aug. 3
- Pray for Jeff Richards' work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to train about 600 pastors. The dates are June 29-July 16.
- Pray for Fritz Harms, who will be teaching in Indonesia on Christ and salvation, and for his wife, Brenda Harms, who will be teaching women on the Book of Ruth and evangelism July 30-Aug. 2
- Pray for the family of former ITEM president Virgil Tinklenberg, who went home to be with the Lord on July 4.

## How to contribute

In the U.S. send contributions to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO 63131 or [www.ITEM.org](http://www.ITEM.org). Email: [lwhesterberg@gmail.com](mailto:lwhesterberg@gmail.com). Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to ITEM, c/o Action International Ministries, 3015 A, 21<sup>st</sup> Street NE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 7T1. **Phone 618-939-5069.**