

## The Christian's Counseling Corner

### “WE'RE ALWAYS FIGHTING AROUND THE HOLIDAYS”

As the holidays are approaching, it is almost a guarantee that married couples will be fighting. Many couples are arguing and arguing and arguing over either her parents or his. Why is this happening? The reality evidenced by so many disastrous marital feuds seems to be a strong indicator that something is wrong. It is not a wonder that so many people face this sort of problem. The simple reason is that many married people have failed to obey one of the first commands in Scripture. They have failed to leave and cleave. Either one, or both parties are still clinging to their parents. Their ties with their parents are not completely broken off.

We live in a world that emphasizes spending time with the family so much that it would sound absurd to suggest carving the turkey without them. Slogans like “Home for the Holidays,” topped with that warm and fuzzy feeling we sense as we walk through the stores, all push us to cling to our families. The idea of sticking close to the family has been ingrained in our psyche. Just the mention of separating ourselves from them can incite a blow to the person suggesting such a thing. In an effort, however, to keep up with the family and their traditions and obligations, we seem to be left with a vast number of husbands and wives at each other's throats, often inflicting deep wounds that are rapidly tearing them apart. If only it was as easy for us to sort this kind of matter out as it is for the deer.

Deer? That's right, deer. One day as I was reading the Bible, I came across an interesting passage in Job. The Lord says, “Have you watched as deer are born in the wild? Do you know how many months they carry their young? . . . Their young grow up in the open fields, then leave home and never return” (Job 39:1-4 NLT). These verses made a lasting impression on me. Even animals know how to leave their parents. People, on the other hand, struggle to know what to do.

I don't know how God communicates with the animals. Maybe the deer instinctively know that they are to leave. We, however, should know clearly that we are to leave because the Lord spelled it out for us. He said, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). It is important to notice, also, that this command predates the Law of Moses. In addition, lest some conclude that this was an Old Testament command which needs to be abolished, Jesus also repeats it in the New Testament. He said, “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife” (Mark 10:6-7). Seems simple enough, right? Yet we wrestle with Him to understand what He really means. Does He mean leave and never come back home like the deer? Does He mean just leave your parent's house? What does leave mean to Him?

Leave means you may have to relocate geographically away from your parents. It means change jobs if your dad or mom is your employer. Leave means you don't run to your mom or dad to tell them how badly your spouse is treating you. It means you start new family traditions with your spouse and children instead of trying to spend two hours with her parents and two hours with his parents on Thanksgiving. It means you listen to your husband's advice instead of your parents. It means you cling to your wife instead of your mom. Do you get the idea?

The gist of the matter is practicing the command of God. He made this leave and cleave rule because He knew it would spare us an enormous amount of pain. You won't have to argue with each other and harbor hurts from 1972 if you learn to live the Christian life His way.

For further help on this issue, or if you have a counseling question, email Rebekah Prewitt at rp@lakecitycounsel.com