

The key to providing security to children is recognizing and meeting their needs. It isn't always easy. Babies' needs are pretty obvious: feed them when they're hungry, change them when they're wet, hold them when they want to be close, show them the world when they are curious. But as children grow up, their needs become more complex.

Parenthood



Can a marriage be complete without children? The answer to this question depends greatly on social conditions. Until recently, marriage without children was regarded as purposeless, as it still is among certain national and cultural groups. A marriage that remained childless lost its meaning and for that reason frequently could be dissolved. Mankind has, however, developed beyond this "naturalistic" view, for with the decrease in mortality of children and with the prolongation of human life, fertility has become less important for the preservation of mankind, nations, and races. General cultural and political conceptions determine the desire for children more than do economic necessities.

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The relationship between economic conditions and the number of children is complex. Families who can afford many children generally have fewer than those who cannot afford them. Some couples plan parenthood in accordance with their ability to support children. Wanting children is natural, but social forces around us influence our thinking so that we either procreate without restraint, or control our fertility even to the point of having no children.

Planned Parenthood



More than fifty percent of all pregnancies in the USA are unplanned.

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The ability to conquer natural forces in the outside world and within himself enables man today to make a deliberate decision. We must recognize the antagonistic social tendencies which affect the individual and complicate the marital problems. On one side are certain religious and political demands to rear as many children as possible. The sociological background of the political encouragement of birth is obvious. Groups striving for national or racial superiority demand a large number of offspring to claim more rights and to supply armies to fight for them. It is more difficult to

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trace the social meaning of religious precepts. The idea of Divine Providence excludes man's right to decide about life, which is given and taken by the Lord. A third factor responsible for large families today is quite different. It is indifference and ignorance which often prevent deliberate planning of parenthood.

On the other side we are confronted also by divergent forces coinciding in the demand for limited parenthood. A certain sense of responsibility prevents some married couples from having children, because they cannot offer what they feel children require-economic security, pleasant surroundings, a balanced and happy life, and reasonable prospects for the future. They question the right of anyone to produce children in times as distressing as the present. This argument in itself may be based on a real sense of responsibility and be part of an outlook on life following ideas of Malthus, or it may express only personal cowardice and timidity. A more courageous person may see chances for progeny where a timid soul cannot envisage even his own survival. Selfish tendencies are frequently hidden behind a pretense of responsibility. Women may be more interested in "girlish figures" than in womanhood; men may consider the accumulation of money more important

than spending it on children. Caring for a child may involve sacrifice of leisure time and freedom of movement.

The nature of the theses offered as reasons for or against procreation makes it difficult to decide in anyone instance what influence the existence or nonexistence of children may have on the fate of the marriage. The outcome will depend very much on the moral forces involved. Couples having many children because they are inspired by deep religious feelings or by feelings of national and racial pride face different problems than a couple whose numerous offspring are the undesired products of carelessness or drunkenness. On the other side, a childless union as a result of selfishness and fear is different from the companionship of two people devoted exclusively to each other. Whether childbirth is avoided because of sincere

consideration for the child or for consideration for the parents has practical consequences upon the marriage.

Since man has learned to regulate reproduction, there has been a definite tendency to reduce the number of offspring sharply. Moreover, the whole meaning of marriage has changed with the emancipation of women. Companionship has to a large degree replaced motherhood. Love has become meaningful even without "natural" consequences. Sexuality is no longer merely a scheming device of nature to force reproduction. Human sex proves thereby its independence of natural compulsion; it has changed its function from the animalistic drive as part of the reproduction process to a human practice for personal gratification. Love unites two human beings for common endeavor, and having children is only one part of their marital functions. Husband and wife have significance for each other apart from their potential parenthood.

