

FAMILY LIFE & RELATIONSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

The “**Spiritual Stronghold**” for **January 2014** is “**Family Life & Relationships**” and we invite Churches throughout Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin to make this a focus for corporate prayer during services on **Sunday 5th January 2014**.

In addition, below you will find some “**Points to Ponder**” with additional information and topics for which to pray plus details of **resources** that you may wish to research.

CORPORATE PRAYER

Heavenly Father

We thank You that Your desire is to have an intimate relationship with each person through Jesus.

We are so grateful that Jesus is the Way to the Father and that You accept us through Him.

We pray for families in our community:

- *for those where relationships are fractured or strained;*
- *for single parents struggling to make ends meet, especially those with absent fathers;*
- *for children and adults living in fear of abuse: physical, mental or emotional;*
- *for families where illness, disability or bereavement causes distress;*
- *for those who are lonely because they have no family members to call on.*

We pray too for Christian marriages and families to positively influence our communities and demonstrate Godly relationship principles and values.

We ask Holy Spirit that You will inspire us, the Church, to increasingly support and provide facilities for families in need.

May families and relationships in this county flourish and reflect Your heart of compassion and love.

We ask this in Jesus’ name and for His glory, Amen.”

POINTS TO PONDER

Loneliness Psalm 68:6 (NLT) says, “*God places the lonely in families*”

- What does this mean in practice for us as God’s people? Where are we active in helping lonely people?
- How can you pray for people in your community/neighbourhood who may be lonely?
- What can you do to interact with them or invite them for a meal or to a church event?

Divorce

Consider the following statistics (source – Office of National Statistics: latest published figures December 2012)

- 42% of marriages in England and Wales end in divorce;
- 34% of marriages are expected to end in divorce by the 20th wedding anniversary;
- An additional 6% of marriages are expected to end by the 20th wedding anniversary because one of the spouses has died;
- Just 60% of marriages are expected to survive to the 20th anniversary;
- Only 16% of marriages reach the 60th wedding anniversary;
- The average marriage is expected to last for 32 years;
- The 7 Year Itch is a myth: for over 40 years, divorce rates have been consistently at their highest between 3 and 6 years after the marriage. After peaking between three and six years, the likelihood of a marriage ending in divorce decreases with each following year;
- The cost of family breakdown in the UK is £44billion per year –higher than the UK defense budget;

Pray for marriages and especially that Christian marriages will be a positive example

Somewhere in the UK has to have the lowest divorce rates: why not here in Shropshire?

SHROPSHIRE

Shropshire Hope 2014

Marriages and Civil Partnerships (source – Office of National Statistics)

- The percentage of marriages conducted in a religious service (not specifically Christian) is at its lowest ever – just 29.6%
- 12.7% of couples are married in a register office and 57.8% are married in approved premises, e.g. an hotel or stately home etc.

Two thirds of marriages in England and Wales are now civil ceremonies

- Since The Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force on 5th December 2005, 60,454 same sex Civil Partnerships have been registered (source – Office of National Statistics to end December 2012)
- Of these 2,477 have already been dissolved – i.e. just over 4%

Pray that the Church will promote marriage as a God-given principle

RESOURCES

The following organisations provide further information on family life and relationships issues. Please note, not all are Christian-based but all offer practical assistance and resources.

Organisation	Overview	Website
Care for the Family	Christian charity headed by Rob Parsons providing parenting, marriage and bereavement support and a range of training events and resources	www.careforthefamily.org.uk
CARE	Christian charity providing resources and helping to bring Christian insight and experience to matters of public policy and practical caring initiatives	www.care.org.uk
Christian Family Concern	Provides services to help parents meet their children's needs, to support the welfare of young people and works with all sections of the community without discrimination	www.christianfamilyconcern.org.uk
Family Lives (formerly ParentlinePlus)	Offers a full range of family support services, e.g. bullying; relationship issues; pregnancy advice; drug abuse	www.familylives.org.uk
Child Maintenance Options	Financial and legal advice for families in difficulties	www.cmoptions.org
Centre for Separated Families	Works with everyone affected by family separation (including profession practitioners) to bring about better outcomes for children	www.separatedfamilies.info
Childline	A private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen	www.childline.org.uk

If you are aware of other organisations that you feel could be included please email us:

admin@shropshirehope.co.uk

