

The Most Important Form of Government is a Father, a Mother and Children

– Governor Mike Huckabee

There's an old Japanese proverb that says, "It is easier to rule a kingdom than to regulate a family." I don't know who said this, but as someone who's done both (though I'd hardly call Arkansas a kingdom), I can say with absolute certainty that he was right.

I'll bet you've never thought of your family as a government. But when you get right down to it, it's the form of government that matters most, much more than Congress or your state legislature or even your neighborhood block association. Get your family right and its strength will wind its way up to the highest levels of global power. Of course, the reverse is also true: When the family fails, so do the other organizing structures around it.

Why does a person commit a heinous crime - use a deadly weapon to rob someone, vandalize a school, rape a woman, murder a hapless victim for twenty dollars, or steal millions from investors (perhaps including friends and relatives) in a Ponzi scheme? Are these acts caused by incomprehensible wickedness? Are these people just plain bad? No, it's really very simple.

These are people who failed to grasp or were never offered the simplest lessons of self-discipline, respect for others, and a strong sense of human decency. And where should those lessons be taught and learned? It's not the job of a school, a workplace, or even a church to provide these most basic of life lessons (though we shouldn't forget about them there either – or ban them from schools and workplaces, as some people are trying to do.) Besides, even when we do rely on institutions for these lessons, they usually fail.

No, these lessons cannot be taught by a teacher, boss, or minister. In order to create truly valuable and respectful citizens, these lessons need to be taught at home. By the time we enter school or start a job, we should have already learned how to behave. I'm not usually a pessimist, as you probably know, but I'm afraid that if a child has not learned to behave by age four or so, he or she never will.

When I was a child and did something my mother found objectionable, she'd say, with some exasperation, "Were you raised by wolves?" Of course (being objectionable), my immediate inclination was to whip back a smart-aleck answer like "No, ma'am. I got it from you!"

But I never did because I knew that the wolf in her would come out and probably chew me out. Plus, I knew what she meant: This was her way of reminding me that I was supposed to try to achieve a certain level of civil behavior. I might even demonstrate a notable difference from animals in the wild by using a napkin, saying a blessing before diving into a plate of food, or washing up before sitting down to eat. Such civilized rules of courtesy, kindness, and unselfishness were expected of me not merely so that I could get what I wanted but because, quite simply, they were right.

To this day, I try to behave the way my mother wanted me to - not because I'm afraid of being grounded (my wife does that now), but because she taught me the difference between right and wrong and showed me by example how to behave. These principles originate, of course, from the family.

Okay, let me say it before you do: No family is perfect, and even children raised in wonderful families can turn out to be like wolves. We've all seen the stories about gang members or looters who get arrested and wish the cops had held them in protective custody in jail when their furious mamas show up to drag them home by the ear.

Still, it makes sense that children nurtured with rules are far more likely to follow them than those given free rein to follow their most primal instincts of "self first, others second." In the national ongoing conversation about how to change "government" and make "society" better, I rarely hear a reference to the obvious starting place: the creation and nurturing of functioning families, in which a mother and a father bring up their offspring with the understanding that the older generation is training the younger to be their replacements.

On this issue, as on so many others, I cast my lot with Ronald Reagan, who said, "The family has always been the cornerstone of American society. Our families nurture, preserve, and pass on to each succeeding generation the values we share and cherish, values that are the foundation of our freedom."

It should surprise no one - certainly it would not have surprised President Reagan - that those who now want to "transform" traditional America recognize this truth from the opposite direction and have placed the American family smack in the crosshairs. You know this. You see it every day, from the many attempts at sexualizing children to schools welcoming drag queens and Satanist clubs to teachers indoctrinating students with radical gender and political propaganda while telling them not to talk to their parents about it (underlying message: your parents are your enemy, the government is your friend.)

Recently, thanks to loose lips on social media, we've actually heard teachers boasting that they own our children, not their parents. They see it as their mission to separate children from parents as early as possible, so that they can fill kids' heads with nonsense about socialist utopias and racial and gender identities instead of parents passing down traditional morality, patriotism and religious faith. One of the few silver linings of the pandemic was that, thanks to online classes, parents saw to their horror what schools were telling kids when they thought their parents weren't listening.

America-hating leftists know that it's the father/mother/children family structure that's made this nation the most powerful and prosperous in the history of the world, and that's precisely why the family is under assault today as never before.

As parents and even grandparents, what can we do? Simple. We fight back. It won't be an easy fight in an age when a thoroughly corrupt and politicized Justice Department tries to tar concerned parents as "domestic terrorists." But it's a fight that parents have to wage and must win. Recent legal victories, like those over Loudoun County, Virginia's, out of control school board, prove that the battle can be won.

What happens in our day to the traditional family will determine whether we stop the slide and remain a morally healthy nation of self-reliant families, for the most part, or continue degenerating into a decadent welfare state of shattered, chaotic, and dependent families.