



## ***Without Natural Affection***

### ***Understanding and Responding to Family Cruelty***

#### ***Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3***

*SOUTH BEND, Indiana (CNN, Friday, September 20, 2002) -- Police have appealed to the public for help in finding a woman caught on videotape allegedly beating her daughter in the back of a vehicle.*

*The reputed attack occurred Friday, when a surveillance camera recorded two women walking with two small children as they departed Kohl's department store in Mishawaka, near the border with Michigan.*

*The women had attempted to return several items, but were refused and asked to leave, said Maggie Jones, deputy prosecuting attorney for Saint Joseph County.*

*As the camera tracked them from the store to a 2002 white Toyota Sequoia SUV in the parking lot, one of the women -- identified by police as Madelyne Toogood, who also goes by her maiden name, Madelyne Gorman -- placed her 4-year-old daughter in a rear seat.*

*The woman, wearing blue jeans and a T-shirt, her blonde hair in a ponytail, looked around the parking lot and then -- for about 25 seconds -- appeared to assault the girl, shaking her and hitting her in the face.*

*Using the videotape, police traced the vehicle to the woman's family and impounded it. Jones said family members told her the girl was one of the woman's three children. But the woman's relatives have been "less than cooperative" in helping authorities locate the girl, Jones said.*

*"Some family members have been shown the videotape and still have not been helpful in the case," Jones said, adding that Gorman will face felony battery charges and her family could face charges as well if they are hiding her.*

*Mike Samp, assistant chief of the Mishawaka Police Department, said the woman had a minor criminal history, and said she had connections to some addresses in Texas.*

*Police in Lake Worth, Texas, a community just northwest of Fort Worth, have traced the address on Gorman's driver's license to a mail box at E-Z Mail, a mail services business. Another Lake Worth address, which seems to be connected to the suspect's car, is the home of a woman who runs a title-transfer and notary business.*

*Back in Indiana, Samp said officials want to find the child to get her medical treatment. "I've been in police work over 20 years, and I've never seen such a horrendous attack on*

*a small child," said Samp.*

*[Author's Note: Madelyne Gorman Toogood has since turned herself in, eight days after the event, and is facing felony battery charges.]*

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1. How many of you saw the video news footage of this event this past week? Can you describe what you saw for the benefit of any others who didn't? What was your reaction? Can you think of any other stories you have seen in the media in recent years that are similar to this one?

*[Leader's Note: Take a few comments in response to the first three questions to get things moving. Some will not have seen the news reports so it is important to establish a good picture of what happened. (If you are leading a discussion and this even is too "dated," search the news for a fresh example of such cruelty.) I could think of several other incidents like this including the woman, Susan Smith, who drowned her two children in her car and another local event where a woman threw her two children to their deaths from a high bridge onto rocks below. The point here is to illustrate that there are cases of extreme family cruelty that seem to defy explanation.]*

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2. If someone asked you to explain this young mother's behavior, what would you say?

*[Leader Note: Be sure to get several responses to this. The fact that there are a number of different possible explanations for this kind of behavior (none conclusive) illustrates that humanity doesn't have a clear answer to this kind of problem. You will shortly show that the Bible addresses the issue and suggests a reason for it.]*

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2. There is a term in the New Testament that probably describes this kind of behavior. It appears in Romans 1:31 and 2 Timothy 3:3. It is *astorgas*, which is variously translated, "unloving" (NASV), "without natural affection" (KJV, ASV), and "heartless" (NIV, RSV). W.E. Vine's Lexicon gives the following definition: signifies "without natural affection" (*a*, negative, and *storge*, "love of kindred," especially of parents for children and children for parents....) In your opinion, is love of kindred (familial love) different from other kinds of love? If so, how?

*[Leader's Note: Allow people to express their opinions even if you don't agree with their answers. Someone will probably suggest that there is usually a deeper level of unconditional commitment in family love. The phrase, "blood is thicker than water" comes to mind. One could explain the difference between the various Greek words for "love" here, i.e., *agape*, *philia*, *eros*, and *storge*.]*

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3. Read Isaiah 66:13, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-11, Hebrews 12:7-9, and 1 Timothy 5:8 for several mentions of familial love in the Bible. Is family love a good thing? Can you think of any important purposes it serves? If this kind of family love were to disappear, what kind of a world would we be left with?

[Leader's Note: These verses are cited just to establish that family love is often mentioned in the Bible. To save time, assign the four passages to four people and have them read them when you call upon them. Family affection is indeed a *good* thing! It provides the bonding forces for the home and assures a place of nurture for all of us – young and old. If it disappeared (and as the family breaks down, it *does* disappear) our world would be a cold and lonely place!]

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4. Read Romans 1:28-32. Note especially the characteristic of "unloving" (NASV) or "without natural affection" (KJV) or "heartless" (NIV) depending upon your translation, in verse 31. According to verse 28, how does a person get to the point of this kind of heartlessness toward one's own kin? According to verse 32, how serious is this problem in God's view?

[Leader's Note: People get to this point as a result of refusing to acknowledge God in their lives. This is very serious – worthy of *death*! The point could be made that without someone larger than self in our lives, self becomes the ruling force. Selfishness is the result and lack of familial affection is a prime identifier of selfishness.]

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5. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-6. Note especially verse 3 where "unloving" (or "without natural affection" or "heartless" depending upon your translation) appears. According to these verses, this characteristic, along with the others listed, would exist in the "difficult times" of the last days. In your opinion, is this what we're seeing?

[Leader's Note: Only a few responses are necessary here. If you see most people nodding in the affirmative, you might even say, "You're all shaking your heads in the affirmative. I see that you agree – this is what we are seeing around us.]

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6. Read Malachi 4:5-6 and Luke 1:11-17. These passages refer to the coming and preparatory preaching ministry of John the Baptist. What result (related to this lesson) occurs when people turn back to the Lord? (See especially Luke 1:16-17.)

[Leader's Note: The answer to this will be fairly obvious. Your aim is to establish that reconciliation to God also brings reconciliation to families. The repentance required in conversion again makes room for others besides self.]

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8. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. According to these verses we (the Apostles first, then us as we share the same message they had) have a ministry of reconciliation, reconciling people to God. According to what we have seen in this lesson, what other kind of reconciliation sometimes takes place? On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the need for this kind of reconciliation in the people you see around you?

[Leader's Note: The aim here is to show that our sharing the gospel is a very *relevant* activity, giving benefit for the here-and-now as well as for eternity. Challenge students that they should never sit still for those comments we hear from unbelievers to the effect that religion is "worthless" and "irrelevant." The need for Christ is seen in the way families are falling apart.]

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9. While it isn't likely that you or I will ever have the opportunity to speak personally to the woman we read about in the introduction of this lesson, there are probably others around us whom we could speak to. If such an opportunity were to arise, what message would such a person need to hear?

[Leader's Note: The simple answer here is that they need to hear the gospel. If you have time, either allow someone to verbalize the message or perhaps do it yourself. Challenge people to look for opportunities to speak and to learn how and what to say.]