



# Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages

*Frances Gies, Joseph Gies*

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**Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages** Frances Gies, Joseph Gies

A compelling, lucid, and highly readable chronicle of medieval life written by the authors of the bestselling *Life in a Medieval Castle* and *Life in a Medieval City*

Historians have only recently awakened to the importance of the family, the basic social unit throughout human history. This book traces the development of marriage and the family from the Middle Ages to the early modern era. It describes how the Roman and barbarian cultural streams merged under the influence of the Christian church to forge new concepts, customs, laws, and practices. Century by century it follows the development -- sometimes gradual, at other times revolutionary -- of significant elements in the history of the family:

- The basic functions of the family as production unit, as well as its religious, social, judicial, and educational roles.
- The shift of marriage from private arrangement between families to public ceremony between individuals, and the adjustments in dowry, bride-price, and counter-dowry.
- The development of consanguinity rules and incest taboos in church law and lay custom.
- The peasant family in its varying condition of being free or unfree, poor, middling, or rich.
- The aristocratic estate, the problem of the younger son, and the disinheritance of daughters.
- The Black Death and its long-term effects on the family.
- Sex attitudes and customs: the effects of variations in age of men and women at marriage.
- The changing physical environment of noble, peasant, and urban families.
- Arrangements by families for old age and retirement.

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