The Centrality of Marriage and Family In Creating World Peace





Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace Authors: Alan & June Saunders Editor: Robert Kittel, Ed.D.



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THE CENTRALITY OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN CREATING WORLD PEACE

Part I The Benefits of Marriage and Family to Society

Marriage and family have been researched from a variety of perspectives. There are lively debates about the configurations of marriage and family. However, social scientists and researchers from both the conservative and liberal viewpoints are coming to a consensus that marriage and family are the cornerstones not only of successful individual and community life, but of good societies, and, by implication, benevolent nations. This monograph will review how the structures of marriage and family provide the necessary foundations for world peace.

The family is a universal institution in human life, which is in itself a testimony to its enduring power. Anthropologist Margaret Mead said:

As far back as our knowledge takes us, human beings have lived in families. We know of no period where this was not so. We know of no people who have succeeded for long in dissolving the family or displacing it....Again and again, in spite of proposals for change and actual experiments, human societies have reaffirmed their dependence on the family as the basic unit of human living—the family of father, mother and children.¹

Marriage is also ubiquitous: all societies have regulated sexual relations and provided for the rearing of children through marital structures. Anthropologist James Q. Wilson said:

In virtually every society into which historians or anthropologists have inquired, one finds people living together on the basis of kinship ties and having responsibility for raising children. The kinship ties invariably imply restrictions on who has sexual access to whom; the child-care responsibilities invariably imply both economic and non-economic obligations. And in virtually every society, the family is defined by marriage; that is, by a publicly announced contract that makes legitimate the sexual union of a man and a woman.² Sociologist Brigitte Berger points out that the family is the most basic building block of civilized society: "Family systems provide the foundations from which...culture and civilizations arise." She says, "The family is the culture-creating institution *par excellence*."³ Berger asserts that the family is the microcosm of civil society because of the civic virtues it imbues in its denizens. Berger suggests people recognize "the singular importance of the family in the formation of civilization."⁴



Certainly there is extensive evidence that the deterioration of the family contributes to decline in society. Data overwhelmingly confirms that the family of a father and mother and their biological children, living together and positively involved in each other's lives, is the optimal condition for the resiliency and success of the next generation.

Linda J. Waite, professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, and Maggie Gallagher, with the Institute of American Values, say in their book, *The Case for Marriage*: "On average, children of married parents are physically and

mentally healthier, better educated, and later in life, enjoy more career success than children in other family settings."⁵

Children living with one parent or in stepfamilies are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than are children living in two-parent families. Children of single-parent and blended families are more likely to show symptoms of aggression, use of alcohol or other drugs, delinquent behavior, psychological problems, such as depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts.⁶

Even spending some time in a single-parent home is a risk factor:

Children who spend some time in a single-parent home are at higher risk for poor behavioral and cognitive outcomes, and among children who spend any time in single parent homes, children reared in single-parent homes continuously since birth are at greatest risk... Compared with children in continuous two-parent families, children in all other family types...have a high level of behavioral problems and lower cognitive test scores.⁷ Another study said, "Compared with peers in continuously married families, students who were in the disruption process scored lower in all four academic tests and in educational aspiration."⁸

This research is echoed in data that has been pouring in for decades. For instance, in 1988, the National Survey of Children, which followed the lives of a group of seven to eleven-year-olds for more than a decade, found that children living with one parent or in stepfamilies were two to three times as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems as children living in two-parent families. They dropped out of high school in higher proportions and are much more likely to abuse alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs. Girls were more likely to engage in teen sex and have an unwanted pregnancy. They were more likely to become violent or get in trouble with the law. These studies have been confirmed many times over. Age, race, socioeconomic status, locale, and the educational level of the mother have little impact upon these statistics. The predicting factor is a broken family.⁹

Economically, children in single-parent homes are the poorest of all major demographic groups. Few children raised by their married biological parents experience poverty during childhood, but most children in single parent homes do. Experts have coined the phrase "the plunge into poverty" that women and their dependent children undergo after divorce. Forty-six percent of families with children headed by single mothers live below the poverty line, compared with only eight percent of two-parent families.¹⁰

Perhaps Karl Zinsmeister at the American Enterprise Institute summed it up best as he reported to Congress:

There is a mountain of scientific evidence showing that when families disintegrate, children often end up with intellectual, physical and emotional scars that persist for life. We talk about the drug crisis, the education crisis, the problem of teen pregnancy and juvenile crime. But all these ills trace back predominantly to one source: broken families.¹¹

The link between non-intact families and social pathology can be found worldwide. Studies in England and Germany have shown that family breakdown was the significant factor contributing to the rise in crime in those countries. Researcher Norman Dennis at the University of Newcastle said that because of divorce, "Young men in England and Germany became much more prone to criminality, drug abuse, and sub-criminal disorder."¹² Cross-cultural studies have shown that this

link between non-intact families and social pathology can be found worldwide.¹³

Violence and marital absence or breakdown are closely related. David Blankenhorn maintains that crime rates in general are directly related to the numbers of divorced people, single parents, and single people in communities.¹⁴ Sociologist David Courtwright said, "When stable family life has been the norm for men and boys, violence and disorder have diminished. That was one important reason why, during the midtwentieth century marriage boom, violent death rates showed a sustained decline."¹⁵ Courtwright cites such times as the days of the Wild West, when women were scarce, and the Gold Rush, which attracted large numbers of single men to congregate, as well as the days of many unemployed single males in urban areas, as examples of times and places when violent crime rose to astronomical heights. He argues that when men and boys embrace the norm of stable family life, violence and disorder decline, and peace ensues as men become stakeholders in community life.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead quipped that every society faces the problem of what to do with the men. Socially speaking the best solution to that problem seems to be: Marry them.

Part II The Structures of Marriage and Family: The Four Realms of Heart

How do stable marriages and families have such a positive impact on society? Educator Gabriel Moran maintains that the family "teaches by its form."¹⁶There is something about the very structure of marriage and family that schools people in positive behaviors.

One of the Reverend Dr. Sun Myung Moon's unique contributions to the world of thought is the idea that the family structure creates certain "realms of heart" that educate people in relating to others selflessly. This tallies with what ethicist James Q. Wilson says: "The family is a continuing locus of reciprocal obligations that constitute an unending school for moral instruction."¹⁷

The family works naturally to pull people into awareness of others from the earliest moments of childhood. Developmental psychologists widely agree that early positive interactions with parents, including facial interplay between parent and child,¹⁸ promote the development of empathy.¹⁹ Attachment theory states that from these interactions, a child forms "internal working models" that he or she projects onto the world.²⁰ Studies of people of unusual altruism—rescuers of Jews under Nazism—reveal one common characteristic. The rescuers all had very warm relationships with one or both parents, causing their empathy to grow to the point where they were willing to sacrifice themselves for others.²¹

Developmental psychologist Selma Fraiberg writes of childhood interactions with parents as a continuum of increasing awareness of and responsiveness to the needs and wants of the child's most significant others: "At every step of the way in development, a child is obliged to give up territories of his self-love in order to earn parental love and approval."²² Growing as a child in a family is a continuing education in how to relate favorably with others by being good. As Wilson has stated, "The mechanism underlying human moral conduct is the desire for attachment or affiliation."²³ Attachment needs dictate that one's love and behavior grow steadily away from considerations of self to consideration of others.

The moment a sibling arrives on the scene, the child must explore new avenues of relating to others. He or she is now required to share his or her parents' time, resources, and affection with another. This naturally and necessarily pulls older children in the family toward greater other-centeredness, once again having the potential to foster altruism. Pediatrician Benjamin Spock observed that it was morally good for older children to help their parents with their younger siblings, and that many older children go on to the "helping" professions because of their benevolent experiences in caring for younger siblings.²⁴

Studies show that moral development is spurred on by issues that arise between siblings—sharing possessions, learning to take turns, controlling physical and verbal aggression.²⁵ According to researcher Willard Hartup, sibling relationships provide "contexts in which the basic social skills of communication, cooperation, and group entry skills are acquired or elaborated, and...are forerunners of adult relationships, including relationships in the workplace."²⁶ Mediated by the love of the parents, sibling relationships provide a whole new arena for learning to relate to others.

Like living with siblings, living with a spouse requires constant sharing and consideration of the needs, wants, and presence of another who is truly unlike one—truly "other"—and different in physical, emotional, and mental makeup. Some degree of privacy and autonomy is always sacrificed; some degree of self-centeredness has to be given over. As marital expert Judith Wallerstein said, "A marriage that commands loyalty...requires each partner to relinquish self-centeredness."²⁷ Dr. Scott M. Stanley, a prominent marriage researcher of several decades, said, "Love is not remotely possible without sacrifice...active love is that which will require you at some point to put aside self-interest in favor of the good of the other and the relationship."²⁸

Judith Wallerstein found that the happy couples in her study "were not envious of what they gave to the other. They did not dole out kindness with the expectation of immediate reimbursement. They did not weigh their gifts or keep records. Supporting and encouraging the other was a given. They accepted this major task not only as fair but as necessary to make the marriage succeed."²⁹

Marriage stretches one's ability to relate to others outside the marriage as well. Erich Fromm said that, far from being ego-centered or centered upon one other person, true love between men and women "is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not toward one object of love...If I truly love one person, I love all persons, I love the world."³⁰ One husband of over thirty years described marriage as touching the "love that includes everything and everybody, the love that's universal... everything that is good about connectedness and caring for others."³¹

Marriage asks people to relate responsibly not only to one another but to multiple others—a whole new community of people they are related to by marriage—"in-laws," friends and associates who are part of the spouse's life. As author Jo McGowan said, marriage is a "community-building act from the start...[it] is to say that the meaning of one's life can only be found in the context of a community. It is to acknowledge one's part in the human family."³²

The apex of selfless love is reached when couples become parents and give of themselves and of their resources to nurture the well-being of another. Parenthood is to "have your heart go walking around outside your body."³³The priceless fruits of one's entire being—one's children—are outside of one's self, and in many ways outside of one's control. To protect, to nurture, to give all good things and benefits to, to cherish and support in every way, to love fiercely and yet with great vulnerability—this is parenthood. It is the greatest love of all.

James Q. Wilson states that the love of parents for their children is the common human trait found throughout history and in all known societies. All people can identify with this. All over the world, the sight of an infant in a mother's arms can melt the heart and draw people together in shared understanding. During times of war, people are

moved in their hearts by pictures of suffering children on the enemy side, and they want to call for an end to the carnage.

Parents even constitute a kind of political sub-culture. One survey found that the most marked differences of attitudes on cultural issues are between those who have children and those who do not. These differences transcend economic, political, racial and other demographic factors.³⁴ Parents' attitudes on social issues take into account how those matters will affect the lives of their children, for whom they want the very best. This illustrates that parenthood marks a passage into a new way of looking at things that is powerfully focused on the needs and welfare of another or others.

Parental love is the prototype of mature love for others, an appropriate model for common human relationships such as employer to employees, government leaders to citizens, teachers to students, military commanders to those on the lower echelons, priests and pastors to parishioners and congregants—any relationship where one person has broader experience and seniority over others.

John K. Brandt, CEO of the Manufacturing Performance Institute, a research and consulting firm, wrote an article in the online March 2004 issue of *Industry Week* called "Parenting Your Company to Profits." In it, he said, "The lessons we learn at home, with the people we care about most, are the ones we ought to take to work too." Such lessons for a leader, he says, are the parental skills of establishing boundaries, coaching with praise and positive correction, pushing for success, and allowing for growth.

Some of the greatest leaders in history came to be recognized as parents to the people. Common folk called Lincoln "Father Abraham" as he led them through the battle against slavery during the Civil War. Gandhi's close followers referred to him as "Bapu," which means "Papa," as he led them in their conscientious struggle for independence. People of every persuasion are comfortable with calling Catholic nun Agnes Gonxha Bojaxniu "Mother Teresa" because of her loving parental heart toward the poor. Crowning these great people with the title of parent shows how high, how honorable, the form of parental love is.

The parental heart has even spawned a peace movement to address one of the most intractable conflicts in the world: that between Palestinians and Israelis. Yitzhak Frankenthal, an Israeli orthodox Jew, founded a group known as the Parents' Circle after his 19-year-old son, Arik, was murdered by Hamas in 1995. The Parents' Circle embraces parents from both sides who have lost children in the conflict. They have banded together in mutual sorrow and empathy over their losses to call for an end to the killing. Hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian families have joined his campaign to end the bloodshed so that parents can breathe easier about the future of their children. Together, Israeli and Palestinian parents plead for an end to the suffering of parents and their children.

An extension of parental love, the love of grandparents for their grandchildren, was said by Abraham Maslow to be "The purest love for the being of the other."³⁵

Grandparents are an invaluable source of rootedness for a child. Children who have relationships with their grandparents are more trusting, calmer, and quieter than those who do not.³⁶ Grandparents are the link to all that has gone before and they give a sense of continuity and reassurance. Grandparents help children to know what life was like long before they were born—where they have come from and the kind of people they have sprung from. They are the family's link to the chain of human history. The grandparental heart has an innate need to give from their lifetime storehouse of knowledge and experience to nurture and enrich the younger generations. Erikson and his colleagues have characterized the primary challenge in old age as one of "integrity versus despair" with the possibility of culminating in a profound awareness or higher sense of self.³⁷ In this last stage of physical life, individuals have the capacity to experience their personhood as that which "transcends time-bound identities."³⁸

The curious grandchild who absorbs their stories, their insights, and their values becomes a keeper of the family's—and of the community's and nation's—flame. In that way, they know they have made a difference and left some influence on the world. This is their link to immortality.

The patterns of relating learned in the family extrapolate into social relationships, impacting the community, the nation, and the world. Children's allegiance and obedience to their parents translate into positive relationships with authority figures and the state itself. Siblings' good interrelationships school people in equality, sharing, non-violence, and mutual respect. Marriage brings people into a transcendent web of interrelationships and reconciles differences in the closest quarters. Parenthood teaches a person what it means to selflessly nurture and promote other human beings' welfare with patience and concern. As prototypes for social relationships, good family relationships are the very cornerstones of peace.

Part III The Marriage Movement and Other Efforts to Support Marriage and Family

Acknowledging the value of marriage and families in general to society is not to say that all marriages and families are beneficial. Nor is it intended to make single people, divorced or single parents feel guilty. People cope with life's complexities as best they can, many with heroic self-sacrifice. Some people have little choice about their situations. Some people have difficulties that defy easy or available answers.

Highly conflicted and violence-filled marriages are risk factors for many difficulties in children. In fact, relationships in "intact" families are often so problematic that, for a time, social scientists believed that every family was dysfunctional in some way. They saw the institutions of marriage and the family as so flawed they thought that it might be well to do away with them altogether.

Dysfunctional families, even without divorce, have done their share to contribute to the world's misery. Almost everyone has some mental and emotional scars left over from a childhood spent under the auspices of highly imperfect parents in highly imperfect marriages. These scars take their toll, perpetuating and multiplying the original offenses as people almost inexorably re-enact their pain by visiting it upon others.

There is much evidence, for instance, that victims of child abuse go on to abuse their own children, or other children who come under their power, in a difficult-to-break cycle of violence. When abused children rise to positions of power over others, they become a menace to whole groups of people.

Alice Miller of The Natural Child Project did a detailed study of the brutal beatings Adolf Hitler received as a child at the hands of his authoritarian father, as well as child-rearing practices extant in Germany at the time. The beatings his father gave him often went bloody, and young Adolf sometimes counted as many as thirty-two blows. When Hitler's personal psychological agony and humiliation meshed with the agony and humiliation of the German people after World War I, and when he appealed to the norm of authoritarian father figures who used corporal punishment with impunity, a whole nation went under a thrall of violence that impacted the world. Miller says:

Countless human beings have already been killed in wars whose instigators didn't want to realize they were

carrying dynamite which they were constantly trying to get rid of at the expense of other people in order to take revenge for old, highly personal wounds. Physical as well as psychological abuse of the children is not only harmful but highly dangerous, not only for the individual but under certain circumstances for whole nations.³⁹

There are many instances of unhealthy family relationships contributing to social and world turmoil; therefore, our interest should lie in not only promoting marriage and family per se but promoting *healthy marriages and families*. There are many programs and initiatives designed to do just this.

According to a report by the National Marriage Project entitled *The State of Our Unions, 2004: The Social Health of Marriage in America,* Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Poponoe stated that "A handful of states, using flexible dollars from the 1996 welfare reform bill, are already experimenting with pilot programs to lower the divorce rate or to encourage 'healthy marriages'...Marriage-strengthening initiatives are underway in local communities as well."⁴⁰

In 2004, Congress considered an Administration proposal for \$1.5 billion in dedicated funding for activities to promote healthy marriages as part of the reauthorization of the federal welfare program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

The Administration for Children and Families has committed at least \$90 million in grants for marriage and family programs, assistance, research, and evaluation. There are numerous privately funded marriage education and marriage enrichment programs and seminars, many developed by therapists, which are widely available.

According to a report from the Center for Law and Social Policy, over the last ten years, every state in the United States has made some efforts to strengthen marriage and two-parent families. These efforts included changes in state marriage and divorce laws encouraging more commitment and counseling, policy changes regarding marriage and families, programs, activities and services, educational programs, and supplements for low-income couples to be able to attend marriage education classes.

In the United States, there is a "marriage movement" of important signatories who hold conferences, disseminate information, and lobby lawmakers to put policies into place that promote healthy marriages. In its statement of purpose and persons involved, the Marriage Movement says that it is a grass-roots movement with the goal of publicly promoting and mustering forces in favor of marriage, drawing its ranks from academicians, marriage therapists and education specialists, the legal profession, the ranks of social workers, religious leaders, humanists and any and all who support marriage. The movement prides itself in the ideological diversity of its membership, although its membership agrees on at least one major point: the centrality of marriage to social and personal happiness.

Why the need for all these programs—governmental and otherwise? The challenges we face in our modern world to create successful marriages and families are possibly greater than ever before and the traditional supportive structures are no longer present. "Developing a family is the hardest, most complicated job in the world," according to famed family therapist, Virginia Satir.⁴¹

Traditionally, men and women prepared for marriage and were sustained in marriage by institutions like the extended family. In many countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa today, several generations still live together and lend one another the support of a network of experienced relatives. In the more affluent and developed nations we have been experimenting with the nuclear family, which seems to be being steadily reduced down to the single parent family. If, according to the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child"—which it does—the nuclear family cannot bear the stresses of child-rearing alone, and single parents are at a particular disadvantage.

It is almost impossible, or at least extremely difficult, to re-create the extended family at a time when different family members are living in a variety of states or even in other countries. It is here that churches and religious organizations can support single and two-parent families by providing the community or village network of support and information—acting as a surrogate extended family. Indeed, the revolutionary idea of government funding of faith-based organizations that provide services to marriages and families has recognized the potential in faith communities to serve this purpose.

Another movement in America and in many other countries around the world may be able to assist in laying the foundation for successful marriages and families. While communication skills are essential to any successful relationship, character is even more foundational for a successful and lasting marriage. Virtues such as commitment, trust, honesty, respect, caring, honesty, and fidelity—hallmarks of successful marriages—need to be developed from child hood on to buttress the future. As marital therapist Blaine J. Fowers and others point out, all the techniques in the world will not replace a heart of kindness and 11

goodness in the lifelong partnership of marriage. Fowers says that all the best techniques for improving marriages "have an ineluctable moral core."⁴²

It is a sign of hope for marriage and family that the United States seems ripe for a broad cultural shift back to moral values, particularly in matters relating to marriage and family. The 2004 presidential elections in the United States left many political pundits pondering deeply about why President Bush was re-elected on the theme of moral values over and against other important issues like the economy and the war in Iraq. The debate rages on as to why the elections went the way they did; however, perceptive analysts see coming to light longburied aspirations to live in a culture where marriage is once again a sacred commitment between a man and a woman who are responsible to and for one another and their children. This is the timeless, elemental relationship between men and women and their descendants that has served humanity so well, and which has, with recognition and help, the potential to serve it even better in the future.

Part IV Marriage, Family, and World Peace

For world peace to become a reality, many current situations in the world need to change. Poverty, racism, inequality, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and terrorism all need to be dealt with for social change to be completed. At the same time, it is in the family unit that individuals receive the most influence in their lives. World peace starts at the individual level and then may be expanded through successful marriages and families to the community and nation. When the family of nations works together cohesively with mutual respect, cooperation and trust, then world peace will become a reality.

The family is the "crucible of character," implicitly teaching about virtues of self-sacrifice, empathy, compassion, patience, honesty, loyalty, trust, personal responsibility, and respect for others. More fundamentally, it is the school of love, where the foundational capacity to invest love and care for others is acquired and developed, then extrapolated into larger communities of belonging.

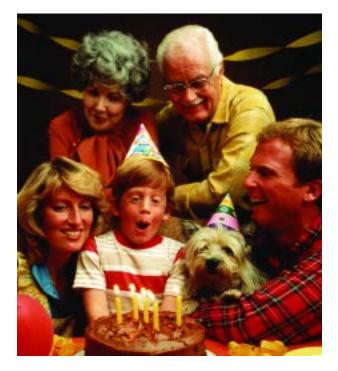
Marriage has the power to bring together people of different faith traditions and ethnicity. In an assembly of members of the International and Interreligious Federation for World Peace, Reverend Dr. Sun Myung Moon spoke on the topic, "Loving Your Enemy in the Face of Terror." As he noted the wide diversity among the attendees: Jewish, Islamic, and Christian, among others, he took the occasion to recommend an international and inter-religious marriage ceremony, encouraging men and women of different nationalities and religions to unite in marriage as a major step toward world peace.

Ultimately the love in marriages between people from different backgrounds and the love of their clans for the ensuing children can impact the peacemaking process.

Since marriage affirms a person's responsibility to and belonging in the whole human family, Reverend Dr. Moon's vision of marriage is as a blessing of communal significance for human relations, and he feels it is his special calling to facilitate such marriages. He advocates communal weddings, which include in the vows language about the marriage participants' responsibilities to humanity as well as to God and one another. With such a vision in mind, marriage truly becomes an instrument of peace.

As the great sage Confucius said:

When the heart is set right, the personal life will be cultivated; When the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; When the family is regulated, the nation will be in order; And when the nation is in order, there will be peace in the world.



About the Authors



Alan Saunders

Mr. Alan Saunders is the Director of the Office of HIV/AIDS prevention and the Office of Character Education for IIFWP. He gives teacher training workshops, seminars, and conferences aimed at empowering NGO leaders, teachers, social workers,

community leaders, and parents to deal effectively with the HIV/AIDS pandemic through prevention. Mr. Saunders is also the International Director of Public Relations for the International Educational Foundation and has taught moral education, relationship education, and life skills training programs in several countries around the world including: Trinidad & Tobago, St. Lucia, Guyana, and the Dominican Republic as well many countries in Eastern Europe and Russia. In addition to conducting "Train the Trainer" seminars in Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, South Africa, Kenya, Cameroon, Benin, Togo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mr. Saunders, in February 2004, gave a presentation on moral education, HIV/AIDS prevention, and relationship education to the Ambassadors at the African Union Headquarters of the United Nations in New York City.



June Saunders

June Saunders is a writer, researcher, and presenter on issues of marriage and family, character education, and conflict resolution. She is currently authoring books in the series Love Is Learning to Cherish, a character/relationships/abstinence education curriculum.

The series is published by The Alliance for the Family. Other recent publications include "The Cause and Resolution of Conflict," The Future of Peace, published by the Eleanor Roosevelt Institute for Justice and Peace, Carolina Academic Press (2003) and Cultivating Heart and Character: Educating for Life's Most Essential Goals, published by Character Development Group (2000).

June has presented at the United States Air Force Academy's Center for Character Education, the Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education, and the American Teacher's Association, as well as at numerous other conferences in the United States and abroad. She has taught literature and language arts at the middle school level and advocates teaching character through the classics.

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The family is the crucible of character, implicitly "teaching" about virtues of honesty, loyalty, trust, selfsacrifice, personal responsibility, and respect for others.



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