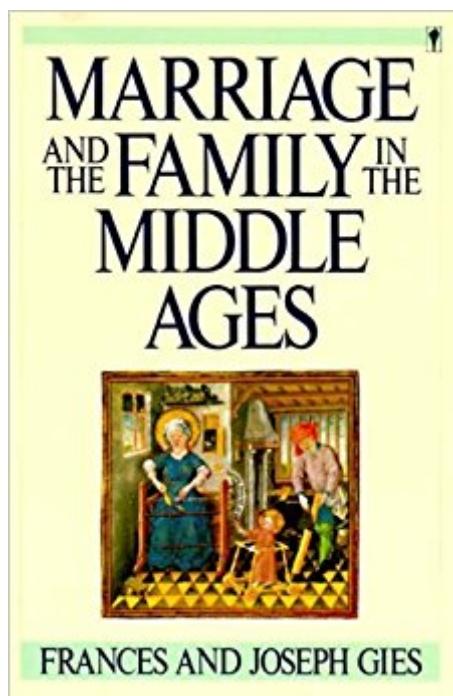


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# Marriage And The Family In The Middle Ages



## **Synopsis**

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.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

I have been reading this book over the last several nights and have really enjoyed it. Not a scholar or an historian, I am simply a person who has an unquenchable thirst for stories about this time period. I liked the chronological format of the book, and I was particularly interested in the growing nature of legality over issues like land transfers, inheritance and marriage. If I could meet the authors I would like to ask them about the process they used to research this book, and if they were able to actually look at some of the original documents they report from. The notes and bibliography are fascinating, and when I next have a chance to visit the U of M's library, I will look up some of the titles. I would like to thank the authors for this wonderful book!

I truly enjoy every one of the Gies books I pick up. They are thoroughly researched and offer not only a historical look at the Medieval time period, but also an anthropological look at the culture and trends of the times. I have most of the series, and would recommend them to anyone wanting to get a more in depth look at this time period, even people who would not normally read history can enjoy them and get a great deal of information easily.

Interesting read. Felt as if reading someone's doctoral dissertation though. Would have enjoyed more nitty gritty every day facts like what did they do for a bathroom, what did they use for toilet paper or diapers what did they cook and eat. What was childrens' clothing like. But a good read to relax you. No heart pounding moments in this book. And I did learn a lot.

The Gies know how to write a history book for the non-historian, without seeming shallow. "Marriage and Family in the Middle Ages" apes readers of the major workings and much minutiae of family life in the middle ages, and does not shy away from comparing peasant life to noble life. As you explore the changes in quality of life since the fall of Rome up to the comparative richness of the Late Middle Ages, you may see an analog of your own country's creation. The book also clarifies the shifting opinions of the church, the nobility, and the peasantry on such issues as abortion, divorce, adultery, family size, gender issues, and more. A great resource for writers, reenactors, history teachers, and roleplayers. To see a review of the book in the context of roleplaying games, check out my review at

nice to read how things were back then, very different from today. This book was very well researched by the Gies; my only complaint was it made for me dry reading. Good for authors who want to base their fiction in this era and want to get their facts right.

It took a bit to get used to the academic style of writing--I've been out of college for decades. But, after my mind came into rhythm with the style, I couldn't put it down. EXCELLENT!

Exploring the lives of families in the past showed me how our concept of family life has been fluid and gave me fresh insights of family issues today. History shows the love within families, even as it shows the development of its structures until modern days.

An excellent work about a time about which little is really known. Frances and Joseph Gies manage to make fascinating what was a grim time for everybody. The book describes the form marriage had in different periods of the middle ages and what family life was like, complete with scandals and the biographies of several people of the time to provide background. The pervasive influence of the Catholic Church and what it meant at a time when it was the only international Law is shown in detail. The hardship both noble and peasant endured, the uncertainty of life and the bizarre ways(to us)families organized themselves to survive are clearly shown to provide us with a window into the times. The contracts aging parents wrote with their children surprised me more than learning how short-lived noble dynasties were. This is a book for those who want to learn some history and don't want to endure some dull text book.

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