**Genesis and the Divine Institution of Family Part Two 07032022**

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 A. Understand the importance of the family

 B. Understand the purpose of the family

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 We’re working through the book of Genesis, the book of origins, and we’re taking our time. In the past four months we have talked about the attributes of God. We have talked about how He spoke everything that exists into being from nothing, and He did it in 6 days. We have talked about how he made this entire universe for us. We have talked about how we were made in His image and likeness. We have talked about the incredible detail and order within his creation, which includes us. We have talked about how mankind has rebelled against God and disobeyed, causing all of His beautiful creation to be tainted and corrupt. We talked about Cain, Abel, and the lessons that can be learned about devotion to God from their story, and most recently we have talked about how God has created us to work so that we can multiply, be fruitful, subdue the earth and have dominion over it. This Godly directive provides the context for marriage, and its natural extension, the family. Finally, we have examined God’s definition and will for these two building blocks of society.

 Hopefully, we have come away with a fuller and higher view of God, and a more realistic and humbling view of ourselves. Hopefully, our faith in Him is incrementally increasing as He is revealed to us more and more. Now, hopefully, we are seeing how our lives are not organized incidentally, or by some process of human trial and error, but that life is orderly and functioning because God has established it to be that way.

 Perhaps most importantly, we can see through all of this how very much God loves and cares for us. And hopefully, as we see how much He loves us, we can resolve to love Him back and do things His way. This love from and for God should then spur us on to love others.

 Today I’m going to continue talking about family, and as promised, I’m going to go a little deeper into the subject. Not so much in terms of a definition of family, since that couldn’t be more straightforward, but more in the interest of defining what it is that God expects of us regarding His concept of family, and how we can “do family” better.

 I will speak frankly and directly regarding the truth of scripture, and I will do my level best to deliver the truth with and in love. As I’ve tried to say the past couple of weeks, we all have failed to meet God’s holy and just expectations. No one here has lived up to God’s standard, so let’s just get that out of the way right now. The thing is though, that God loves each of us so much that He made the ultimate sacrifice for us so that despite our sin and rebellion, we could be reconciled to Him. Now our call is to abide in Him, regardless of the events in our past.

 So, you’ve got a dark past, huh? Yeah, well so do I. Today is a new day, though.

SLIDE 1

2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us that **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

 This is a fact. It is true EVERY day.

Now, as for this sermon, I must tell the truth, and I must say what I have to say in love. What I have to tell you this morning is important, and it is straight from the mind of God since it is His word, but 1 Corinthians 13:1 reminds me that **“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.”**

Please receive this in the same spirit that it is given – and that is in the spirit of truth and love.

Let’s Pray...

SLIDE 2

Okay. Let’s once again recall to mind God’s singular, exclusive definition of marriage and its natural extension, family. Genesis 2:24 begins with “Therefore,” which means we must look backward since what is about to be said is dependent on things that have been said. Beginning in verse 4 of Genesis chapter 2, we are given a detailed account of the creation of man and the garden God made for him. God sets up the context for the creation of woman, His very last act of creation. My belief is that women should be held in the highest regard and that God truly saved the best for last in His creative order. As I have already noted from Genesis, God caused Adam to see his need for an equal, complementary partner, and He gave Adam the most incredible gift imaginable in Isha. Woman. Together, they were to fulfill God’s directive to be fruitful, multiply, subdue the earth, and have dominion over all that God had given them.

**Genesis 2:24 reads, “Therefore, God said a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”**

It would do us all a lot of good to reflect on the perfection of this arrangement.

On the one hand, it’s a system. A system which made God’s intention for mankind possible, the intention that we would be fruitful, multiply and have dominion. But there is more. It was a system based on complementary equality, and perfect love. What do I mean by perfect love? Adam says in verse 23 that Eve is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” verse 24 tells us the man and wife become one flesh, and verse 25 tells us that the man and his wife were naked and unashamed before one another and God. No hang ups, no embarrassing self-awareness, no secrets, no self-seeking, absolutely nothing between them and nothing between them and God. It was perfect!

Hopefully, many of us have had glimpses in our marriages of this perfection, but the reality is that we are intimately familiar with the consequences of sin and the fall in our marriages.

Despite the fall, God’s intention for the family was and is no less magnificent. The family was intended to function flawlessly, a well-oiled machine fueled by love, mutual respect, and total openness. The same perfection that marked Adam and Eve’s union is implied in all subsequent unions that the open-ended verse 24 of Genesis chapter 2 indicates. Chronologically, after God declared the definition of marriage and family, He said at the end of the day, “This is VERY good,” meaning, “this is perfect.”

As for the roles in the family, what was implicit in Genesis is made explicit in some passages we often refer to in the New Testament. Roles for Father, Mother, and Children are clearly expressed in these passages, and they simply illuminate what God set up in Genesis.

What we are about to read must be handled carefully, in truth and in love. Men and women alike need to pray for understanding and help from the Holy Spirit in consideration of these verses. Please open up to Ephesians chapter 5 and Colossians chapter 3. We’ll start in Ephesians.

SLIDE 3

**“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything. 25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...”**

Verse 33 says, “**Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband.”**

**Colossians 3:18-21**

**18 “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. 20Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.21Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”**

If we cannot escape the confines of our modern, western way of thought, these verses can be VERY challenging. We risk making a huge mistake here and saying that these verses are only relevant to the 2,000-year-old Judeo-Christian audience to which they were written. Or we misinterpret these verses to set up a weird culture of total male dominance (as outlined in the curse).

When we calm down, relax, and take the time to look at these passages within the context of an organized, intelligent, and loving God and His plan for us to be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion over His creation, these family relationships may start to come in to focus for us all. When we go further and see these verses in the full context in which they were given, we can see how we and our marriages are subject to the rule of Christ. We all have a role to fulfill with humility and subjection to God. Also, remember the correlation between family roles and the roles of each member of the Trinity. Three function as One.

SLIDE 4

Julie has a hand-written note on the fridge. It says, “Duty has us do things, but love has us do them beautifully.” As we move ahead today, let’s all resolve to choose to do things with love.

As I mentioned last week, the curse has made things immensely difficult, if not impossible for us in regard to marriage and the family, but God’s template has not changed. His expectations remain. So let’s look at our families with our eyes open to His demands. I’ll call this part of the sermon the Good, Bad, and the Ugly.

SLIDE 5

First, The GOOD.

What I’m calling good in regard to marriage and the family involves one Christian man united with one Christian woman. This couple understands that they are one flesh, and they live and function as a team in all things. Perhaps they have children, and perhaps not. Not everyone is biologically able to reproduce, for a variety of reasons. Some in this situation choose to adopt or take in foster children, and some decide to remain childless. In any case, this hypothetical unit is aware of and adheres to God’s directive to be fruitful, multiply and have dominion. The husband and wife live and work together through the grace God gives them. They are in a deep relationship with one another, and more importantly, with Jesus.

SLIDE 6

In addition to knowing and following God’s earthly purpose **(“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” - Genesis 1:28**),

this couple recognizes and adheres to God’s command in Deuteronomy 6:5-7.

“**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”**

These verses should frame the household purpose and family culture for a Godly family. The husband/father functions as the head of the household, meaning that he bears complete responsibility for his family, and is accountable to Christ for every single aspect of his family’s existence. This is a serious undertaking and a massive responsibility. The wife in this household serves the same purpose and role as established in Genesis. She is the *Ezer*, the helper that is akin to the Holy Spirit. She has come alongside the man to help him be fruitful, multiply, have dominion, and to adhere to, follow, and teach the statutes of the Lord to the children. She is to submit to his authority just as the husband is commanded to submit to Christ’s authority. The children are also commanded to submit to authority. One quick side note: There is a distinct difference between authority which is from God, and control, which is from Satan. Remember the curse in Genesis 3: 15.

**“And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.” (NLT)**

These control and domination aspects of the curse which have served to derail this template of a good marriage that I have been describing, are tools of Satan that corrupt the arrangement God has established.

Back to SLIDE 5

In this model of GOOD, each member of the team does their job in submission and love for the Lord and one another. There is Godly focus and order. The family is on a mission. All aspects of Godly love are in effect under this roof. Let’s quickly review those. Please turn to 1 Corinthians 13. In the New Living Translation, Verses 4-7 say, **“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.” (NLT)**

This is the kind of love the husband/father exemplifies for his wife and kids, and the wife and kids respond by exercising the same kind of love towards him and one another. This is a picture of what good looks like. In this household, devotion and love for Christ and a desire to share His love outside the home is the overarching, number one purpose. That is what God calls, “Good.”

One last thing: Fathers, you can do everything right, but you cannot control the decisions your wife and children make. Your job is to set them up to make the right decisions, but they have free will. In this respect, you cannot be responsible for the choices they make, only that you fulfill your responsibility before God. However, when you do this in love, things can come into alignment.

Now for the BAD marriage/family. What I’m about to say may be shocking and controversial to some, but I am on solid footing scripturally. I will not spend a lot of time on this, because we all instinctively know what bad looks like. When I say bad, I am still referring to a “Christian” marriage, or one in which both partners claim to be followers of Christ. There is one common marker for all bad Christian marriages. In EVERY case, the husband/father is not operating in obedience to God. He is either 1) not walking in and with Christ personally, 2) he is not fulfilling his God given responsibility to assume headship and leadership of his family, or 3) he is abusing the authority he has been assigned by God and destroying his family from the inside out. Remember what I said about control being evil? I’ll stop and let you think about that for a minute...

Bear in mind that #1 on this list always leads to either #2 or #3.

If you are a husband and father, or just a husband, everything about your family begins and ends with you. You are 100% responsible. What did Adam do when he was confronted about his sin, which directly resulted in the fall of all creation (Eve’s didn’t)? He blame shifted. He did not accept his accountability and responsibility. Since I’m speaking directly to men right now, I will not sugar coat this or try to assuage your feelings. If your family is not functioning properly in love, purpose, and synchronicity, you are responsible. This being the case, you are in all likelihood forcing your wife to assume a role she is not designed or equipped by God to do. You are placing her and your kids in a terrible situation. If this is the case, repent, ask all involved parties beginning with God for forgiveness, and move forward in newness of life. I don’t know how I can be more straightforward than this.

If you have found yourself situationally in a single-parent household, if you are a Christian single father or a Christian single mother, I encourage you to “trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path.” God loves you and has a perfect plan for you. What is in the past is done. Place your past in God’s hands and know that He loves you and has you at this exact time and place exactly where He wants you. He is standing in the gap. He can and will fill the missing space in your family.

 And now for the Ugly. This is a family without a Christian influence or presence. On the surface some of these families may appear okay. Having said this, we can not expect them to exhibit any of the purposes we were created for or any fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control). We can expect dysfunction and conventionalization, or redefinition which is counter to God’s establishment.

As I said, unbelieving households may look fine outwardly, but under the roof and inside the walls, they are bound to be subject to dysfunction, mistrust, selfishness (the root of sin) and control issues.

I was going to give a bunch of statistics about “Bad” Christian households and “Ugly” non-Christian households, but I think we are all aware of what these look like, mostly from personal experience. We are all fallen. Romans 3:10 says there are none righteous, no not one.

SLIDE 7

But as I have said for the past couple of weeks, TODAY is a new day!

Husbands and Fathers, if you have failed to uphold your responsibility to love your wife and kids as Jesus loves us, His church, and wives, if you have failed to submit to your husbands and have tried to control your husband, take these words from the Apostle Paul to heart:

**“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17**

Sadly, It could be that some of you will only hear condemnation and accusation coming from me today. If that’s what you are thinking or feeling, please stop. Jesus loves you. He cares for you. He wants you to move forward in Him. What matters is what you decide right NOW. You cannot do anything to change the past, but you can allow the Holy Spirit to change you at this moment. If you have been uncomfortable today, allow that discomfort to move you. Like my Grandpa said, “When you realize you’re digging a hole for yourself, stop digging.” Please take the hand up that Jesus is offering and climb on out of that hole. It’s not too late for you and your family.

Finally, Husbands, Love your wives and give your lives for them, just as Jesus gave away His life for you. Wives, pray for your husbands. Ask the Holy Spirit for the compassion and strength you need to respect your husband and to help him fulfill his God-given responsibility. Children, obey and honor your parents in everything.

SLIDE 8

Application:

1. Husbands, Love your wives... (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

2. Wives, Respect your husbands... (Proverbs 31:10-31)

3. Children, Obey your parents... (Ephesians 6:1-3)