

THE BIBLICAL FAMILY

WEEK 1: WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL FAMILY?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- In this 6-week series we are going to discuss the Biblical family. This is going to be an overview of what the Bible says about some key topics, roles and patterns that should be in every family.
- **Week 1: What is a Biblical family?**
- Week 2: What priorities do parents have in their family?
- Week 3: How do husbands and wives' function in the family?
- Week 4: How can conflicts be handled and resolved Biblically? Part I
- Week 5: How can conflicts be handled and resolved Biblically? Part II
- Week 6: How can conflicts be handled and resolved Biblically? Part III
- There are obvious caveats which need to be talked about before diving into the series.
- **Single family homes and singles in general:**
 - No matter what stage of life you are in, you have a God given responsibility to live for His glory.
 - Many people are in the situation they are because of choices they made or choices that were made against them. Not all single parents chose to be in their situation.
 - Single parents who have been sinned against need our prayers, encouragement, and help.
 - Both single parents and singles in general have Biblical principles to learn and apply so that they are helping to maintain a Godly society.
- **The overall goal of this class is to give theological understanding and practical wisdom on the purpose of the family and how God desires to use the family for His glory and for our good.**

DEFINING THE BIBLICAL FAMILY

- The family is the foundational institution of society ordained by God. It is constituted by marriage and is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood or adoption.
- The only way that a family will reap the full rewards of God is if they hold to the Biblical model.
- Biblical model does not mean man, woman, and biological children only.

- It is important to remember that God is sovereign in giving biological children to couples (though adoption is also at the heart of God's plans, Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:5-7), He is also sovereign over if your spouse and/or children pass away.
- While it is true to say that the Biblical model for a family is one man, one woman and their children, it certainly does not happen that way all the time. Some of the circumstances which lead to this are out of our hands (death, adultery, etc.) and some are the effects of our sin (adultery, abuse, etc.).

What makes a traditional family into a Biblical family?

- From a sociological viewpoint, the purpose of the family is to ensure the continuation of society. This is done primarily in two ways:
 - **Biologically:** through procreation
 - **Socially:** through the socialization of the total family
- This is what is called the *Traditional Family*.
- Since this is the overall goal from a secular point of view, the function of the family may be the same but the overall nature of the roles of the individuals are going to change.
 - **Example:** since the secular culture says that a family is defined by being able to procreate, the concept of procreation has been changed to now include men.
 - If our society is going to accept men being women and women being men, then in order for that ideological framework to succeed, there has to be changes which take place.
 - They cannot say our society is going to continue **without procreation**. That would simply not be acceptable at any level, so they say "men" can become pregnant.
 - Now we have what is called the *LGBTQ family unit* (to be sure, this is not a family by any rational definition from anyone)
 - This definition has been in constant change over the past decades and will continue to change because of the absurdity of this lifestyle.
 - There is no reliance of traditional or heteronormative definitions as this group of people continue to add to the chaos by their sinful choices. (marrying animals, children, etc.)
 - There is no way that this lifestyle can fulfill **any** rational definition of what the family is.
- **Any non-Christian "family"** can certainly appear to be successful. They can maintain a marriage between a man and a woman, they can live their lives without any apparent sin, raise their children to be good citizens and productive members of society.
- For all intents and purposes, they look like what we would consider the Biblical family. There is peace in the home, the appearance of love between all the family members, an orderly home, etc.

- So, what separates the traditional family from a Biblical family? If the traditional family is taking care of their kids, their spouses and they are being productive members of society, why is that not enough?
- **If you're not a Christian, there is no hope whatsoever that you can make your marriage and your family everything God intended them to be, unless you first acknowledge your need for Christ and trust Him as Lord and Savior.¹**
- If your family does not recognize Christ as the Lord and savior of their family, the seeds of your family are going to ultimately break down and have no real spiritual stability.
- God is the one who designed marriage:
 - Genesis 2:24 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”
 - God is the one who created man, woman and their *one flesh-ness* with each other.
- **As a man and a woman are married to each other, they constitute a family. But it is only when that family seeks to honor and glorify God as born-again believers that they now become a Biblical family.**
- Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 10:37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”
- Christ demands to be first in the family, that we love Him more than we love our own family.
 - The greatest part of this command is that when we put Christ first, when we love Him the most, we are going to love our own families with a love that they cannot comprehend.
 - When we seek to please Christ, we are going to be pleasing to our family.
 - When we seek to serve Christ, we are going to be serving our family.
- So, while other non-Christian families may look the part, they are only living for each other or just themselves. They are not living for the glory of God.
- **How elevating it is to realize that your family is the divinely ordained and primary vehicle to bring glory to God.²**
- **As Hughes says, this is how we need to start looking at our families. God is the one who must have the center of our focus. Not education, not money, not prestige, *but glorifying God.***
- This is what should separate you from your “good” nonbelieving neighbors. Your decisions, your desires and your attitudes are not based on worldly information but solely on pursuing Christ.

¹ John MacArthur, *The Fulfilled Family: God's Design for Your Family* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 2005), 3.

² Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family*, Rev Ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 16.

HOW CAN WE MANIFEST A BIBLICAL FAMILY TO A FALLEN WORLD?

- There are many practical ways that we can do this, and we are going to look at more of them as we continue through this 6-week study. We are just going to touch on them now and move deeper into each one as we look at specific roles and duties of each person in the Biblical family.
- Now we are going to look at 3 ways every family should be living for the glory of God in their daily walk.

Through our Influence of Society

- When we recognize our family as a tool for the Lord, we are going to make decisions which seek to bring Him honor and glory.
- One of the crucial ways a Biblical family can be used is for the betterment of their society, or the immediate people around them, is that they interact with those people on a regular basis.
- **Ephesians 5** has much to say about the believer's walk in this world and how the Biblical family is to function in the world.
- **Ephesians 5:15-16** "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil."
 - As a family, how are you using your time? What takes up your days and weeks?
 - The phrase *be careful* is an imperative verb, a command from Paul. It means *to discern* or *to perceive*. This means that our days should have purpose. We should have goals that we want to accomplish and things that need to be done.
- Think about the influence you have on society just by being a Biblical family of Godly purpose.
 - Once again, this is not having a worldly purpose. We do not want to fall into the trap of thinking this life is all that there is to live for.
- Our purpose is to glorify God and we can do that by making sure our days are taken up with things that have eternal value. Just as Paul said, we make *wise* decisions throughout the day. We want what we do to count, not just for today but for all eternity.
- If it has to do with what job you take, what house you buy, where you move to, where you spend your money, etc. There are a million decisions that we make that can have a Godly impact on the people around us, that is why Paul says *be careful how you walk*.
- **Ephesians 5:22** "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord."
- **Ephesians 5:25** "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her..."

- Both of these concepts we are going to look much closer at in the upcoming weeks, but for the purpose of influencing our society, these should be at the top of our list.
- **Firstly, the wife is to submit to her own husband...as to the Lord**
 - While we all know this is a loaded topic, it is no less true. Just because our society looks at all submission as evil, does not take away from the sweetness of this command.
 - Submission has nothing to do with worth but everything to do with roles. Both the husband and the wife have equal worth in the eyes of God, but they have different roles.
 - As a wife tells her neighbors, coworkers, friends, and family that she *must talk to her husband first or my husband doesn't think I should do that*, she is showing her love for Christ as she submits to her husband's desire.³
- **Secondly, the husband is to love his wife, as Christ loved the church.**
 - How did Christ love the church? Paul says *He gave Himself for her*. Christ literally died for the church. He set aside everything else and served the church by His death.
 - This is how the husband is to serve his wife. He is to put her first and show her that same love.
 - Paul also defines this love in **verses 28-29** **“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church.”**
 - Husbands are to take care of their own wife just as they take care of themselves.
 - Practically, this means that a husband may not be able to have his dream job if it does not take care of the family. He may not be able to play 3 rounds of golf every weekend as it puts too much stress on his wife.
 - He may need to tell his friends, coworkers or family that his wife or family needs him, so he is not able to participate in some event.
 - **This means that the husband must grow-up, take on responsibility and be a man.**
- Both husbands and wives can greatly influence the people around them simply by living with each other as the Bible has commanded.

³ “Husband’s desire” obviously does not include sin or things which would harm the wife or the children. There may be times that the wife does not agree with the husband, but there is nothing morally or ethically wrong. In those instances, once she has been able to give her opinion and personal desires, it may be that she simply must submit as God has placed her husband as the head of the family. The wife should never comply with sinful requests of her husband or anything that would bring disgrace to the name of Christ.

Through the Sanctifying Effect of Marriage

- When we were first married, the new relationship revealed rooms of selfishness in our lives—and within those rooms’ doors to other rooms, and in those rooms yet other doors and closets. The revelation was the beginning of an ongoing, lifelong housecleaning.⁴
- How can we manifest a Biblical family to a hostile culture? **You as the husband or the wife are becoming more and more like Christ because of your spouse.**
- How does this look practically? You do not complain about your spouse or talk about how you would do something differently because you know more.
- You have a desire to grow in Christlikeness and realize that your spouse can speak this truth to you.
- You have a heart to listen to your spouse when they talk, taking the good and the bad. Not becoming defensive or avoiding responsibility that God has given to you.
- **Proverbs 19:14 “House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.”**
 - The word for *prudent* here means *wise and understanding*. Our wives are gifts from the Lord so that they can wisely, and in an understanding way, speak into our lives for our growth in godliness.
- **1 Peter 3:7 “You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”**
 - While there is a lot packed into this verse that we will discuss in future classes, I just want to point out that men are to be understanding to their wives and to show them honor.
 - This means that as the husband is seeking to better understand his wife, the wife must be willing to be understandable.
 - The husband should be seeking the betterment of his wife, but the wife should have the desire to allow her husband to do this.
- As both the husband and the wife are killing their own pride and allowing their spouse to sanctify them, they are going to be noticed by people around them.
- Instead of getting upset when your spouse says something, you rather take it to heart that there may be some truth in what they are saying.
- We live in a culture that is solely centered around self and what an individual can gain. Far too many people complain about their families to anyone who would listen, some intentional and others just out of habit.
- When you see your spouse as someone who God has placed in your life to make you more into the image of Christ, you will find a deeper love for them and for God.

⁴ Kent Hughes and Barbara Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Family*, Rev Ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 17.

- If you're single, these may be the friends, family and coworkers that are placed around you. You also have a great opportunity to show others the gospel by allowing people to help you grow into the image of Christ.

Through understanding that our marriage is a display of the gospel

- **Our marriages have far more importance than simply meeting needs or having companionship. Your marriage does not exist for you.**
- All marriages in some way or another point to the gospel. Biblical marriages shine a bright light of the gospel for all the world to see. There are two main ways that our marriages do this:
 - **When we keep the covenant that we made with our spouse.**
 - That same picture of covenant keeping is put on display between Christ and His church. Christ will never divorce His bride. Christ will never put the church away and issue her a bill of divorcement. Our marriage relationship is connected to Jesus' relationship to the church and we must remember this on the good days and the bad days of our marriage relationship. The lost world around us needs to see us work through our marriage difficulties and overcome challenges as we keep our covenant. We expect to hear the breaking news of Hollywood couples filing for divorce. After all, their definition of marriage is rooted in the sordid ground of base sitcoms. Our definition of marriage comes from the pages of sacred Scripture — and it reflects the glory of Christ and His covenant keeping love for the church.⁵
 - **When we practice the lost art of forgiveness.**
 - One of the most powerful verses in all of Scripture is **Ephesians 4:32**, “**Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**” If this is true of the church in general, imagine how much more so this is true within the covenant keeping relationship of marriage. How much has Christ forgiven His bride of foolish talk, laziness, idolatry, and various other common everyday sins of the flesh? How can we as men refuse to forgive our wives if we've received the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ? Why can't Christian wives forgive their husbands of wrongdoing and sins in marriage if they've been the recipients of God's mercy and love through Jesus Christ?⁶
- Whatever we do in life and no matter how successful we become in business, **we must strive for success in marriage.** If there is one pursuit worthy of our time and devotion, it's the pursuit of a God-glorifying marriage that proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁷

⁵ <https://g3min.org/3-ways-marriage-proclaims-gospel/#:~:text=Marriage%20and%20Sacrificial%20Love&text=In%20what%20way%20did%20Christ,the%20gospel%20through%20our%20marriage.>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

WHERE IS OUR CULTURE GOING?⁸

- The share of U.S. adults who are currently married has declined modestly in recent decades, from 58% in 1995 to 53% today (2019).
- Over the same period, the share of adults who are living with an unmarried partner has risen from 3% to 7%.
- While the share who are currently cohabiting remains far smaller than the share who are married, the share of adults ages 18 to 44 who have ever lived with an unmarried partner (59%) has surpassed the share who has ever been married (50%).
- Views about marriage and cohabitation are also linked to religious affiliation. About three-quarters of Catholics (74%) and white Protestants who do not self-identify as born-again or evangelical (76%) say it's acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together even if they don't plan to get married.
- By contrast, only 47% of black Protestants and 35% of white evangelical Protestants share this view.
- About half of U.S. adults (48%) say couples who live together before marriage have a better chance of having a successful marriage than those who don't live together before marriage; 13% say couples who live together before marriage have a worse chance of having a successful marriage and 38% say it doesn't make much difference.
- Adults younger than 30 are more likely than older adults to see cohabitation as a path to a successful marriage: 63% of young adults say couples who live together before marriage have a better chance of having a successful marriage.
- Just over half of cohabiting adults ages 18 to 44 are raising children, including about a third who are living with a child they share with their current partner. A majority of Americans (59%) say that unmarried couples who are living together can raise children just as well as married couples.
- About two-thirds of U.S. adults (65%) say they favor allowing unmarried couples to enter into legal agreements that would give them the same rights as married couples.
- Relatively small shares of U.S. adults say being married is essential for a man (16%) or a woman (17%) to live a fulfilling life.
- Far larger shares see having a job or career they enjoy as essential in order for a man (57%) or a woman (46%) to live a fulfilling life. One-in-five say having a lot of money is essential for a man, while 15% say it is essential for a woman. When it comes to having children, 22% see it as essential in order for a woman to live a fulfilling life; 16% say this is essential for a man.

⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/11/06/marriage-and-cohabitation-in-the-u-s/#:~:text=The%20share%20of%20U.S.%20adults,from%203%25%20to%207%25>.