



Faith Pulpit

A Theology of the Family

I. God created and designed the institution of the family (Gen. 1:27, 28, 2:18, 20–24; Matt. 19:4–6).

- A. The family design, structure, and order existed before the Fall.
- B. The family continues through all dispensations until eternity.
- C. The family is the means by which God propagates the human race.
- D. The family unit is the basic building block for both society and the church.

II. God's design for most individuals is to enter into the institution of marriage.

A. Marriage is a sacred covenant before God and between spouses (Prov. 2:17, Mal. 2:14; cf. Ezek. 16:8).

1. Marriage is a lifelong union between a man and a woman (Gen. 2:24).

- a. The man and woman leave their parents' households.
- b. The man and woman are joined in a one-flesh union.
- c. The man and woman form a new household.

2. Homosexual marriage is unbiblical (Gen. 19; Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 1 Tim. 1:10).

3. Marriage is lifelong but not eternal.

- a. The death of a spouse dissolves the marriage bond (Rom. 7:2, 3).

- b. Resurrected believers will no longer be married (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34–36).
- c. Since death dissolves the marriage bond, the surviving spouse is free to remarry (Rom. 7:2, 3; 1 Cor. 7:39).

4. Marriage is honorable and good (Prov. 18:22; Heb. 13:4; cf. 1 Tim. 4:1–3).

5. A believer should marry only another believer (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; cf. Neh. 13:23–31).

B. Marriage fulfills many Biblical purposes.

1. It provides a picture of God's relationship with His people (Eph. 5:22–33).

2. It provides companionship (Gen. 2:18).

3. It propagates the human race (Gen. 1:28).

4. It provides the proper place for romantic and sexual intimacy (Prov. 5:19; Song of Solomon; 1 Cor. 7:1–5; Heb. 13:4).

5. It provides protection, provision, and prosperity (Ps. 127:5; 1 Tim. 5:4, 8).

C. God designed husbands and wives to fulfill specific roles within marriage.

1. Godly husbands have many roles to fill.

a. As the head of his wife, a husband is to lead his wife and family like Christ leads the church (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23).

b. A husband is to love his wife selflessly and sacrificially like Christ loves the church (Eph. 5:25–30).

c. A husband is to seek his wife's sanctification (Eph. 5:26–28).

d. A husband is to live with his wife with understanding (1 Pet. 3:7).

e. A husband is to honor his wife as a fellow heir of God's grace (1 Pet. 3:7).

f. A husband is to provide for and protect his family (Gen. 2:15; 1 Tim. 5:8).

g. A husband is to seek the satisfaction of his wife sexually (1 Cor. 7:2–5).

2. Godly wives have many roles to fill.

a. A wife is to be a helper and companion to her husband (Gen. 2:20–25; 1 Cor. 11:7–9).

b. A wife is to submit to her husband's authority (Eph. 5:22, 23; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1–6).

c. A wife is to adorn herself with the inner beauty of a quiet and gentle spirit and with good works (1 Pet. 3:4, 5; cf. 1 Tim. 2:9, 10).

d. A wife is to strive to be an excellent wife through industry and integrity in the fear of the Lord (Prov. 31:10–31).

e. A wife is to seek the satisfaction of her husband sexually (1 Cor. 7:2–5).

3. Pastors and deacons are expected to have exemplary marriages if they are married (1 Tim. 3:2, 4, 12; Titus 1:6).

D. Divorce destroys and separates the one-flesh union God established in marriage.

1. God opposes divorce (Mal. 2:10–16; Matt. 5:31, 32, 19:2–12; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10).

2. God gives clear commands not to divorce (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9; 1 Cor. 7:10).

3. Divorce is the result of hard-heartedness within one or both spouses (Matt. 19:8; Mark 10:5).

4. Divorce is never required, and reconciliation is always preferred.

5. Whether divorce is permitted according to Biblical teaching is debated.

a. Some evangelicals hold that divorce is permitted for two Biblical reasons: immorality (Matt. 5:31, 32, 19:9) and abandonment (1 Cor. 7:15). Most advocates of this view allow for remarriage in certain circumstances.

b. Some hold that divorce is not permitted at all (Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18). Most who hold this view do not allow for remarriage.

III. God's design for some individuals is to remain single.¹

A. Singleness is honorable and even preferred in certain circumstances (1 Cor. 7:7–9).

B. God allows individuals to choose to remain single (1 Cor. 7:9; cf. 1 Tim. 4:1–3).

C. Those who remain single are choosing a life of celibacy and purity (1 Cor. 7:7–9).

D. Singleness is a divine calling for a select few (Matt. 19:11, 12; 1 Cor. 7:7).

1. Singleness provides individuals with unique opportunities and allows for undivided devotion to serve God (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:32–35).

2. Some examples of servants of God who were single include Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Paul, and, of course, Jesus.

E. Single people in the church today fall into four categories.

1. Some singles are young men and women who desire to marry one day.

2. Some singles are widows and widowers who choose to remain single.

3. Some singles are divorced individuals who have not remarried.

4. Some singles are individuals called to singleness to serve the Lord.

F. Singleness will be the state of all redeemed individuals in the eternal state (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34–36).

IV. God's design for most married couples is to bear and raise children.

A. Married couples are to reproduce.

1. God entrusted married couples with the task of filling the earth (Gen. 1:28).

2. Children are a blessing and gift from the Lord (Ps. 127:3–5).

3. God may allow some couples to remain childless for His own purposes.

a. Some Old Testament passages present barrenness as a result of divine judgment or a curse (Gen. 20:17, 18; Hos. 9:11, 14).

b. God occasionally grants the ability to bear children to previously barren couples (e.g., Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Elkanah and Hannah, and Zechariah and Elizabeth).

c. Barrenness should not be assumed to be divine judgment (cf. John 9:1–4).

d. Adoption may be a noble option for those who cannot bear their own children (as well as all married couples).

4. Although children are a blessing from God, procreation is not the only reason for sexual intimacy (Prov. 5:19; Song of Solomon; 1 Cor. 7:2–5).

B. Parents are responsible to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

1. Both fathers and mothers are responsible to raise children to walk with God (Prov. 1:8, 6:20).

a. Fathers play an especially critical role in child rearing (Prov. 4:1–4; Eph. 6:4, Col. 3:20; Heb. 12:5, 6).

b. Mothers also must teach and train children (Prov. 31:26; cf. 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14, 15).

c. Parents should bring their children to church and incorporate the teaching at church into their child rearing (Matt. 28:19, 20; Eph. 4:11, 12; Heb. 10:24, 25).

d. Parents play an important role in their children's sanctification (1 Cor. 7:14; 1 Tim. 2:15).

2. Parents must correct and discipline their children (Prov. 3:11, 12; Heb. 12:5–11).

a. Correction and discipline must correct the sinful folly within the heart and behavior of children (Prov. 22:15).

b. Correction and discipline must be motivated by love (Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6).

c. Correction and discipline must not exasperate or provoke children to anger (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21).

d. At times corporal discipline is an appropriate and needed form of discipline (Prov. 13:24, 22:15; 23:13, 14, 29:15).

3. Parents must train and disciple their children in the way of the Lord (Deut. 6:7–9; Prov. 1:8; Eph. 6:4).

a. Parents should seek the salvation of their children.

b. Parents should teach the Bible and theology to their children.

c. Parents should train their children to walk in the way of wisdom in areas such as sexual purity, work ethic, integrity, financial matters, and personal relationships (see Proverbs).

d. Parents should model Christianity to their children.

4. Church leaders must demonstrate effective parenting if they have children.

a. Their children should demonstrate exemplary behavior reflecting a well-managed home (1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12; Titus 1:6).

b. Their children should be believers (Titus 1:6).

V. God designed children to honor and obey their parents.

A. God expects children to obey their parents while they live at home (Eph. 6:1).

B. God expects children to honor their parents for their entire lives (Exod. 20:12; Eph. 6:2).

1. Honoring parents involves an attitude of respect
2. Honoring parents involves placing a high value on one's parents.
3. Honoring parents involves protecting and providing for elderly parents (Matt. 15:4-6; 1 Tim. 5:4, 8).

C. Occasionally the gospel results in division among families including parents and children (Matt. 10:34–36; Luke 12:51–53).

VI. God designed marriage and the family as pictures of the believers' relationship with Himself.

A. God is our heavenly Father who answers prayers, provides for our needs, and disciplines His children (Matt. 6:8, 9; Luke 11:2, 11–13; Heb. 12:5–11).

B. Believers are adopted into God's family as His children and sons (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15-17, 23; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5; 1 John 3:9, 10).

C. Scripture uses familial language to describe the church.

1. Fellow believers are considered brothers and sisters in Christ (e.g., Rom. 14:10–21; 16:1; 1 Cor. 7:12, 15; Phile. 2, 20; James 2:15; 4:11).

2. The church is the household of God (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17).

D. Through the incarnation Jesus became our brother so that He might suffer and die to save us (Heb. 2:9–18).

E. Marriage is often used to depict God's relationship to His people.

1. Israel is often portrayed as Yahweh's wife (Isa. 54:6; Jer. 3:1, 20; Ezek. 16; Hos. 3:1).

2. The church is Christ's bride (Eph. 5:22–33; cf. Rev. 19:7–9).

3. Friendship with the world is spiritual adultery for believers (James 4:4).

4. The New Jerusalem is pictured as the Lamb's beautiful bride (Rev. 21:2).

Works Cited

1. I owe some of these thoughts on singleness to A. J. Köstenberger and D. W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2nd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 167–98.
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