

## XXIV. God's Blueprint in Biblical Perspective

### *Foundations From Genesis*

#### The Family: Parenting

#### Ephesians 6:1–4

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I want to start by looking at Genesis 2:18 which says [18] *Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."* This verse has to do with the mandate God has given the man and not having to do with a relational issue for God is enough for him. The mandate is to rule over the creation, subdue the earth and be fruitful and multiply and Adam could not do this without a suitable helper. Let's continue in the text.

Genesis 2:19-25 says [19] *Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. [21] So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. (The woman was taken from the place closest to his heart that he might nourish her and cherish her – she is not over him or under him.) [22] And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."*

*[24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. [25] And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever, by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

The last time I preached on the family and parenting I had children at home, in fact they were all in high school. That was a very challenging time in my life and in most people's life who have teenagers. I think I was doing the series more to instruct myself than anyone else to be honest with you and that was some time ago. I have dealt with the subject from time to time but not as a series. Before I tell you how we will approach this I would like to remind you of where this is coming from in the overall series we are doing.

This series is foundations from Genesis because we live in an age in which the foundations are being shaken. We are living in an age where no longer is the culture an ally for Biblical principles, institutions and concepts. Because of the work of the Gospel in years past in our culture – the Great Awakening, the second Great Awakening, the revivals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – there were a lot of deposits in the culture that you could pretty well call upon on. Some of them could be misused and give the wrong idea of Christianity but I still remember things like the honor code when tests were given. In the public high school I went to, when tests were given teachers left the room and we were expected to discipline ourselves. We had a student disciplinary board. There were no locks in the school and lockers didn't even have locks. It was an amazing time and we had a principal who always reminded us by saying 'Remember who you are and where you're from. You will not embarrass me.' He was really an amazing man. Leadership really counts. We were blessed by him. Schools from all over the US would come just to see what took place at our school and how it was done.

I can also remember driving out with my parents on a trip to see relatives and my mother says ‘Oh no, I forgot to lock the door’ and my dad responds ‘Oh, that’s okay.’ I remember when I moved to Miami for you didn’t walk to the car without locking the door. It was quite the experience I was blessed with and I’m grateful for all of those things. In that high school setting it started every morning with a devotion. We had a Jewish counsel and a Christian counsel and they would take turns doing the devotion time at the school. The Jewish counsel would read from the Old Testament and the Christian counsel would read from both the Old and New Testament. There were allies you could call upon in the culture at that time as Christians and that is disappearing rapidly these days.

Recently, there was a survey done by a secular organization that showed the place with the most knowledge of Bible was Birmingham, Alabama. That’s really interesting but even here you can sense it. I just got back from Israel where people see that as a hot spot yet they only saw 33 murders last year there and it doesn’t take long at all to see that here. We are seeing a culture that is in a death spiral and as a pastor who wants you to understand the foundations that God has established, I know we don’t have many allies to call on out there. Thus, series like this become important.

From the book of Genesis we have looked at these sanctities; creation, God, man, gender (male and female), sexuality, singleness and marriage. Now we look at the sanctity of family and parenting from the book of Genesis. No matter what sanctity we have looked at we have looked at that sanctity in light of creation, the fall and redemption. That is where we will start with the family and parenting – by looking at it from the creation standpoint. Then how the fall effected what God created and lastly what God has given us in redemption to open that up. As we go further into the next few studies we will be looking at three key texts of Scripture. One is Ephesians 6:1-4. Another one is Deuteronomy 6:1-4. The third text is from Luke 2.

How would have liked to parent Jesus? On the one hand I would have loved to have parented Jesus. I wouldn’t have had to figure out what to do for discipline because He never sinned in thought, word or deed. On the other hand, how do you raise the Incarnate Son of God? There are some basic parenting principles from Joseph and Mary that I want you to see.

I want to start into this study by giving you a definition of the family in terms of creation. It is one man united to one woman for life in the covenant of marriage with parental responsibility to raise our children to leave us and establish their own family for God’s glory. Sin hasn’t produced the problem yet because we are looking at how it was established in creation first. Genesis 2:24 shows us that family starts with a marriage – one man, one woman, one life, united in a covenant of marriage. The verse doesn’t say anything about children but it anticipates them because if a man is leaving his father and mother, it tells us the man was a child so there is a family. Starting with Adam and Eve we don’t have a family yet but we will, but what God was putting into place was the basic institution of creation – family.

With what our culture is doing to decimate, destroy, redefine and literally pervert the concept of family, no nation can stand for long. God created us to live in the context of family. The bottom course of a family is a husband and a wife – a covenant of marriage. That is where sexuality belongs. Sexuality initiates the marriage, recreates the marriage and provides procreation from the marriage. Thus, you now have a son and a daughter who leave to cleave. It is assumed that built into the culture of humanity – made in the image of God – is the ability to have a relationship of intimacy and it’s so intimate that it is described as one plus one equals one – physically, biologically, sexually and spiritually. The two become one and out of that comes children. There is Adam and Eve from creation and the expectation is that they will multiply and

fill the earth and that is done through the family structure – marriage, children and then children leave to start their family as they cleave together.

As we get into the next few studies that is one of the biggest problems, particularly from my generation – we raised our children to cleave to us because we were getting our significance from them. Look at the bumper stickers whereby we brag on them and the ones we brag on ourselves. We ended up raising our children to be dependent on us because we were dependent upon them being dependent upon us. I don't like to use sociological terms but I can speak about it because I was at the beginning of it when I was born and I think we turned it into something that was very self-oriented and self-absorbed. Even parenting was put together in terms of that concept. After high school in my family the expectation was that I was supposed to leave, either going off to college or going off to work for my parents had raised me to leave. It wasn't being mean because that is how we are to raise our children – to leave and cleave. The children won't do that unless your parenting has been purposed to that – to give them the skills. The sociologist can substantiate all that I have just said.

The sociologists tell us in the 1970s the age of puberty was 14 and the age of adolescence was 18. Today, puberty is 11 so it has gone down, but adolescence is 26, it's gone up. Adolescence means having the skills to function in life. This is just by a secular analysis. All of a sudden, we have added almost 10 years to just being about to function in society – to care for yourself, to establish relationships, the family. All of those things have disappeared. We have more technology than we've ever had before and all kinds of thing available to us, so what has happened? I think what has happened is that in parenting we have created cocoons for children to be dependent upon them, instead of the skills to leave us, because we have become dependent upon them being dependent upon us. When our children have been taught to leave us then they can go and have their families and we can then have a relationship with them. They have to leave to cleave for you can't cleave until you leave. In other words, they are no longer apart of your immediate family and if you love them you will make sure of that.

There are a couple of ways to do this. My mom and dad basically said 'it's great you're getting married so have a go at it, here is how we will help you get started and we'll be here for you if need anything.' Now my wife's mother was not all that excited about her daughter's choice and if there was ever a woman with great insight it was her. I loved Clara Miller and I grew to love her very much for she was a very no-nonsense German woman. I remember the first time I went to her house to eat when I was courting my wife and I was turning on the charm, or at least I thought I was. We sat down to a meal I'd never had before – a German meal of scallop potatoes and pork chops – and when I took a bite I said 'Oh Mrs. Miller, this is hot but it's delicious, my goodness it's hot.' She looked at me and said 'Well son, it has been in an oven at 480 degrees don't you think you'd be hot too?' I was going to have to find another way to win her to somehow her approving of me.

I remember her statement to her daughter when she was leaving her parent's house to get married – she said 'When you walk out that door on January 26 to get married and it shuts, it shuts so go make that marriage work.' I'm sure that if total disaster had fallen upon her daughter I'm sure she would have certainly taken care of her but her mom was trying to communicate to her that this was her marriage and if there was ever anyone prepared to leave it was my wife, but her mother and my parents were abundantly clear about that. In every marriage I know the father of the bride is having the biggest problem because he is no longer the number one man in his daughter's life (for the sake of this marriage I must not be) and the only one close is the mother of the groom for she is no longer the number one woman in his life and can't be. The father of

the groom probably says ‘praise the Lord he’s outta here’ and the mother of the bride is probably saying ‘you probably could have done better but go get started on your marriage.’ The children can’t get to the leave and cleave if they haven’t been parented with that purpose.

So, how do we get there? Here is a second thing to consider. Working from creation, now sin comes into the world. When sin comes into the world now comes brokenness, with the potential for unfaithfulness, divorce, death which brings about single parenting, and children born with a sin nature. Death enters in through anger as we see with Cain and Abel due to a brokenness in relationship with the Almighty. What does sin do to the matter of family and parenting?

The second thing is what Christian parenting is and that’s a parental commitment to nurture, evangelize and disciple your covenant children in the context of the covenant community – Christ’s church – according to God’s covenant promises, guided by Biblical precepts, relying on the grace of God so that we raise children who can enjoy God and glorify Him forever. This isn’t a house for the parents have made it a home. How do you nurture in that home so that child grows in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man? We will be laying out this nurturing dynamic in the coming studies. For what purpose? It is to evangelize your child. We are not just teaching our children what good Christians do but if this is mainly what we do then we have just raised a Pharisee. We go after the heart first. They need Christ. Parenting is evangelism, then it’s discipleship for when Christ gets hold of the heart the life changes.

I started thinking of Paul’s doxology where for the first three chapters of Ephesians he tells us who we are in Christ and all the blessings that God has secured for the elect. Then in Ephesians 4 he gets into the life that blesses God because of the blessings God has secured for us in Christ so he shows us how the elect live to bless their God from whom all blessings have flowed to us. Paul starts Ephesians 4:1 by saying *[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.* Then he follows this by looking at your personal life – to put off and put on. Then he looks at the church life, the worship life and then to the marriage in Ephesians 5 telling us how a Christian husband is to love his wife and lead her and how Christian wife is to love and come alongside her husband – how they are to be and do in the Lord in their marriage. The two become one functioning together with the mind of Christ. Then Paul moves to the family which is where we will be in the next study in Ephesians 6.

You don’t get better to get blessed with salvation. No, you come to Christ helpless and hopeless just as you are for, He takes you right where you are (Ephesians 1-3), but He never leaves you where you are (Ephesians 4-6). He changes you from the inside out and this is the way relationships are changed. First, He changes your relationship with Him in a daily walk and then He changes your marriage relationship, then your relationships with family. Then He changes your employer/employee relationships. Then He changes you as an instrument in the hands of the Divine Warrior as you enter into spiritual warfare to serve Christ in this world, to rescue the perishing. But He will certainly change you in a marriage, as a parent and in family.

It’s wonderful to see how God has taken the institution of creation, the family, the institution of redemption, the church – the family of God and He has entwined them together with His covenant promises so that they each bless each other. The two work together in such a glorious and wonderful way. It’s wonderful to see our children being raised in the context of the covenant community as we walk with the Lord, serve Him and follow Him. Why is this all so important? I want to give you five reasons why this is so important to teach what God’s Word

says about parenting because there are fewer and fewer allies in the culture at large to assist us. I thank the Lord if you were raised in a Christian home and learned things from your father and mother for I know I did.

First of all, we live in a culture that is no longer penetrated by the salt and light of Christianity and the only way that happens is through Christ's church shining into this world yet Christ's church has lost its way. Most churches no longer have God-centered worship for we now formulate, evaluate and populate man-centered entertainment. Worship sets the template for life for if you don't have God-centered worship you won't have God-centered living. The pulpits are silent on dealing with the tough subjects from God's Word. Most no longer do discipleship and because of that we're not sending out people from the church who are salt of the earth and a light to the world. We're not sending out people who Biblically, not culturally, walk humbly with God, do justice and love mercy in the culture. The result of this is that the church no longer is the thermostat, in fact, if anything the church is more a thermometer of the culture, therefore the culture is constantly seeking to press us into its mold. We live in a culture of insanity, absurdity, lethality and embraces immorality as it mocks any notion that sex is a gift from God within marriage of a man and a woman. All of that is rooted in profitability.

I am grateful for where I live and serve Christ though but it is coming here as well. I'm grateful for my Godly heritage as well and tend to quote the Psalmist who says in Psalm 16:6, *[6] The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.* I'm thankful for the legacy here at this church but when you step outside of this and see what is coming into this, we don't have cultural allies. There is no place else to pick up Biblical parenting than from the Scriptures in the context of Christ's community, His church and when churches attempt to do it the people's ears would much rather be tickled rather than to do the work of discipleship. Then we wonder what went wrong for we had them baptized. You have to ask then what happened in the rest of the home life in conversations, going to church, time spent with your children and what you taught them. Those things you can't go into the culture for any longer. So, we need to do the hard work of discipleship to build in families.

Secondly, we can't even depend on the church at large. I don't always agree with Barna's solutions but they always seem to do good research. Barna did a survey of evangelical church and less than 37 percent of the pastors have a Biblical world view. The questions they were asked had to do with creation, marriage, gender, family, parenting, salvation, Christ, the doctrine of God and less than 37 percent of pastors had a competent, passable world and life view. We have even lost allies within the church so in the culture there is secular progressivism. Whenever you hear the word progressive in our culture it means deconstruction. Progressive secularism is deconstructing every foundational institution in the culture and progressive Christianity is playing the lap dog as they redefine marriage, sexuality, removing the declarations of God's statements of abomination upon sexuality outside of marriage. Hebrews 13:4 says *[4] Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.* We don't even warn people that sin has judgment attached to it. We have lost the allies in the culture and in the church. We have no recourse within the church.

Thirdly, does that not present for us an unbelievable opportunity to build God-centered, Christ strong, exalting marriages and families? This is a glorious opportunity for it doesn't get lost in the sentimentality of family movies or family television. We have this enormous opportunity within the church right now – for elders to get into our congregational communities and start shepherding and discipling, for small groups and for us to have a conference on

marriage and parenting that would be a refuge and opportunity each and every year. The tendency is that since the bubble hasn't totally burst in the city of Birmingham, we just keep going along but we can't do that. We have to take the time to disciple God's people in how to develop a Christian man, Christian woman, a Christian marriage, Christian family and Christian parenting. That will present an unbelievable witness to the world that will continue in its death spiral but what an attractive statement whereby people will say 'how come your marriages that aren't perfect are different, same with your families with everything that is going on around you?' God's grace is greater than sin and you take the opportunity to tell them about Jesus.

Fourthly, this is an opportunity for us to bring focus to our discipleship. I make no apologies for this. It's no accident that our elders put in place a structural change so that we give attention to families and even developing a pastoral position for families so that these things can be integrated together. We can intentionally address these matters, instead of glitz and show and this and that. We are going to get into God's Word, disciple, have God-centered worship and we are going to take time to build the family as we reach out to the singles in our church loving them well and experiencing the blessings of their love in our lives, then families that establish families. These are families that wrap singles in and are blessed by them but families that are being established with marriages that are in Christ and for Christ. In other words, a congregational community that honors the creation institution of the family while establishing all the blessings of the diversity within the family of God as sinners are being saved from all kinds of dynamics in life and are now growing together in the Lord.

Pray that God will bring a spark of hunger for His Word and a hunger to order our lives, marriages and families once again according to the Word of God. Please liberate us God from drive-by church. Help us kill sin, love Jesus, win people to Christ and disciple so that marriages and families are being framed with the Word of God and filled with the Spirit of God. This is the desperate need of the day.

Fifthly and finally, think of the witness that this would present to a world where a people who are serious about Jesus, the Word of God and loving people who are not yet serious about Jesus, what would that look like? What would that look like to see families growing on these trajectories of growing in grace? I remember the sudden awakening I had as a youth pastor. God visited the youth group where I served in Georgia with amazing blessings. I remember getting called into the pastor's office and he said 'Ike (my nickname), there are a lot of kids coming here but you're not using the denominational literature.' I said 'I didn't know I was supposed to.' He said 'Don't you think it's a good idea? Why don't you introduce the denominational literature in the Sunday school time.' I shouldn't have responded the way I did but I said 'We're studying the book of Romans, and isn't it a part of our denominational literature?' The next thing I know I am being called in by the parent's counsel. The bottom line was simply this; we're glad our kids are coming to Bible study on Wednesday, Sunday morning and Sunday evening and all of that but they are kind of going a little bit overboard. Some of them are talking about an alternative prom or going to a Christian college or going into missions.

I began to realize they really wanted me to introduce enough religion to keep their kids from embarrassing them, but if the kids really got excited about Jesus that was a breach too far. It's why I rejoice in what I'm seeing here in the lives of our students and how excited they get about Jesus, but there is another whole level that we need to seek and find and a watching world is at stake.

Another reason why parenting is so important, every survey I have ever read tells me with some very slight differences, 80 to 85 percent of the people who come to Christ, come to

Christ because of what happens in their life before age 14. It's not that old people can't get saved; it's just not as many get saved. There is only one death bed conversion in the Scripture and Jesus got that one on the cross. Basically, people die the way they live and people continue to live the way they learn to live. A home that nurtures and kids get disciplined is a home where kids get evangelized and they are won to Christ and brought to Christ. This perhaps is my biggest burden of all.

There are a lot of hopes. If you are reading this today and you're a Christian one of the great blessings you have is you don't have to come and learn how to parent and then perform for God to notice and bless you, because God has already made a promise to you – I'll be a God to you and to your children after you. Your children are holy and that doesn't mean sinless, it means set apart when they are in a Christian home. Acts 16:31 says *[31] And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."* The promise is for you and your children. Acts 2:39 says *[39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.* It's a promise with its provision for its fulfillment. I will take you through those provisions in the coming studies but I'm grateful we don't have to perform for God to give us a promise. We can parent from God's promise – I'll be with you for I have woven the family into My work of redemption and I work through you.

We will be going through this because of our witness to the world and our walk for Christ in this world and for the sake of your children to say 'no' to sin and 'yes' to Jesus, to miss hell and have heaven and to know the joy of living for God's glory and not the emptiness of this world's vain promises. This is what I think is at stake in parenting and we aren't sufficient but He is able. Ephesians 3:20-21 says *[20] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.* Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Receive our thanks for this Lord's Day and our praise for all of Your glorious blessings that You shower down upon us. Thank You for our marriages, our families and please work in our hearts that we no longer look to the world for magic potions or the philosophies of this age or live by the spirit of this age, but by the Holy Spirit through Your Word live in the Kingdom. God, bless us as a family of believers to raise families and love one another well, no matter where our stations in life or what are status in life. Please God do Your work in us that Your glorious family would bless families and families would bless the family of God that the family of God would be a blessing to this world, putting salt to restrain sin and light to bring sinners to the Savior, for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.