

XXV. God's Blueprint in Biblical Perspective

Foundations From Genesis

The Family: Parenting – Part 2

Ephesians 6:1–4

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July 31, 2022 • Sunday Evening Sermon

We will be looking at Ephesians 6 in this study. One of the challenges when you do expositional preaching – that is preaching that is consecutively oriented in the Word of God – is that God's Word needs to be in context and therefore you can't just take a passage out and make say something you want it to say. You want to avoid eisegesis which is reading what you want to into the text, but we want to bring from the text that which God has ordained for us to understand so that means that the text and the context of the text must be understood. Then when you do a topical expositional series that we have been doing in this series – foundations of the faith from Genesis – we have to make sure these things are connected.

We are now into our final sanctity that we are going to study from Genesis and that's the sanctity of the family. In this sanctity we are looking at three key texts of Scripture and we have started in one of them – Ephesians 6:1-4. We will also look at Deuteronomy 6:1-5. We will draw out some principles of parenting and some best practices sprinkled in along the way as we work our way through it.

I want to remind you that this series was done in response to what is happening in the evangelical church which are the inroads of progressive Christianity. Progressive Christianity is cut from the same bolt of cloth as liberal Christianity from the 19th and 20th century that came to and utterly destroyed the Protestant Church, offering to rescue the mainline Protestant Church. Progressive Christianity has come again with a benign offer to save the church from irrelevance in order to recast and reconstruct its mission and therefore its message. While they are cut from the same bolt of cloth their issues aren't the same. Liberal Christianity is no Christianity and an enemy of Christianity and it's the fact that you are denying the inerrancy of Scripture – it was the denial of historical Biblical Christianity. In progressive Christianity you are denying the sufficiency of Scripture and you will hear something like 'I am deconstructing my faith' for it's not an outright denial but an act of deconstructing.

The Bible tells us there are two beasts that serve Satan in this world – it is the beast of the land and the beast of the sea. Historically throughout the ages the beast of the sea is tyrannical government that declares itself as god and overextends its authority to be god and be the savior of humanity in the midst of its chaos. The beast of the land becomes its servant. The beast of the land is the apostate church. Throughout the ages we have seen this time and time again of this marriage of the state and the church and in order for the church to have its seat of power it becomes a servant to the state and all of its power and authority. This happening right now. This progressive secular movement which is focused upon self defines freedom as anarchy, where every man does what is right in his own eyes and this is being supported by the Progressive Christianity movement within the evangelical church. This movement is also serving to remove the moorings of life that are revealed in God's Word.

This is why I wanted to go back to Genesis – the book of origins – to give us the origins of the pillars of life, the foundations of the faith. We have already looked at the sanctity of creation, the sanctity of Divine revelation, the sanctity of God, the sanctity of covenant of grace, the sanctity of government – why we have government in place. As we look at the sanctity of

the family, including marriage, this is God's foundational institution from creation. Government is God's necessary institution in light of the fall and sin.

What is the symbol of power and authority of government in the Bible that Paul refers to? The civil magistrate has the authority to wield the sword. It has a life and death power and this is not given to the family. The family has something called the rod and the church. The family has the power of the towel, for we're servants. The state has the power of the sword and government, the wielding of the sword in response to sin in order to restrain man's sin and exhibit God's patience with man, is first wielded not by a president, emperor, governor or government, but by the angels themselves as they with the sword guard the way to the Tree of Life as Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden. It is that sword that is now put in the hands of the government. Then there is the church as the response and institution foundational to God's work of redemption.

When Jesus comes into the world, He comes to redeem us from our sin. He goes to the cross to do three things. According to I John He goes to the cross to defeat Satan and his works. Secondly, He goes to the cross to save His people from their sins. Thirdly, He goes to the cross to purchase with His own blood His church. These three things are necessarily in a particular order for I'm just giving them to you. According to Paul the elders primary duty is to shepherd the church of God.

As we learned about the sanctity of marriage there is this glorious statement made in Ephesians 5:25-27 which says [25] *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, [26] that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

So, there is the institute of marriage and family which is creation, the institute of government which is the fall and then the institution of redemption which is Christ's Church carrying the Gospel message until Christ comes again – fulfilling the Great Commission and magnifying the Great Commandment. The last sanctity we looked at was marriage and now we want to look at the family – what the family is supposed to be and do. This is a great burden of my heart and a matter of great brokenness on my heart, because I know so many of our young couples did not get the benefit of some of us who are older had. There was so much I learned from my family, not that it was perfect but there was so much I learned about what a dad is in terms of Biblical masculinity, and what a woman, wife and mother is by watching my mother about what the Bible says about family and marriage. We don't really have that as much today as we used to, for the deconstruction is working.

The progressive secular movement wants to deconstruct the family just like the Progressive Christian movement which isn't Christian. In fact, it is an insidious enemy of Christianity because it uses our terms but not our dictionary. The secular movement gets you to laugh at sexual perversity and promiscuity in sitcoms today, because laughter is an instrument in the entertainment world so that the unthinkable becomes thinkable for if it's laughable then it came become thinkable. Once it becomes thinkable then it can become acceptable and once it becomes acceptable it can become doable. Then it is built into the life of the culture. We see all of these "modern families" being given to our children.

Another reason I'm doing this is because I know that this progressive secular movement unopposed but abetted by Progressive Christianity within the church is aimed at your children. I had always heard how children are groomed by predators but I hadn't learned how the predators groom the gatekeepers to your children. That was eye opening to me when I learned

that. When I see what is done and displayed on television, movies and songs, I see it for what I believe it is – it is the grooming of our children by the predators of the movements of the sexual revolution of sexual promiscuity and perversion. They do it through an iPhone, iPad, the computer and the entertainment world. There is no movie, book, song or painting that is not communicating a world view. They are all communicating something. Have we begun the work of parenting so that our children can see it because of a heart change from the Gospel and can filter, confront it and deal with it because they have a world and life view that is faithful to God? They won't have it without parents and a church that brings discipleship, Gospel truths to parenting and does the discipling. That is the concept behind this study. They put the frog in the kettle and turn up the temperature slowly until it's cooked alive and doesn't even know it. So, it is with the evangelical church being cooked alive even within the culture.

The answer is the inoculation of the truth of God's Word through the presence of the Holy Spirit through discipleship – teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. This means it includes what it means to be a dad, mom and child in relationship to parents – and how this is built upon a marriage. This is so crucial to embrace and engage. Sadly, we're the frogs and we somehow think that this isn't happening or if we don't think about it that it won't happen to our family.

The last 62 mass shooting perpetrators all have one thing in common. They all came from a broken home and in that broken home, 90 percent were fatherless. Out of the chaos and confusion of that comes this striking out in irrational violence. We are responsible for what we do but look at the soil from which it's growing. What is happening in the church of Christ and how can we address these issues Biblically? I say this because here's the danger. When things begin to crumble and disintegrate from the culture because of the removal of common grace, then sometimes the church in its response over responds and it then begins to make its endeavors idolatry. The family is not the savior or God but it's an institution that God has ordained. Jesus saves us but teaches us how to live in a family that exalts the Savior and engages in the parenting necessary to bring children to this Savior. We also need to know the objective of Christian parenting and those are the tracks we're trying to lay down to understand. We have all of these relationships within our family that are built, sustain us and work out things with each other and around each other. How do we accomplish this?

Ephesians 6 gives us some basic contours that we will look at in this study. Ephesians 6:1-4 says [1] *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* [2] *“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),* [3] *“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”* [4] *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Verse 1 does not say this will produce great children for that is a consequence, but it is right, faithful to God's Word. You honor your father and mother during childhood through obedience. This is not after you are married for after your marriage you have left and cleft so you are not directly under God's leadership through your parents. You still honor them but in childhood the honoring is manifesting in obedience. In the Ten Commandments 'honor your father and mother' is the fifth commandment but it's the first one that attaches a beneficial consequence to the lifestyle that is being commanded.

Then Paul flips from the children to the fathers. Fathers, nurture your children, discipline them, create the environment whereby you discipline – the instruction of the Lord – and the environment which is the content of your parenting. It applies to the teaching of the father and mother but the father is responsible. It's not the father goes to make money and the mother

teaches the kids. The father is responsible before the Lord in the teaching of the children in the context of a deeply intimate oneness of marriage. The father is also called not to beat or tear his children down but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If you don't what will happen? The absence of a hands-on father in parenting opens the door for the provocation of anger. I refer you back to the statistic about the 62 mass shooting I just gave you. The broken marriages and families and the overwhelming majority is due to the absent father.

I remember an illustration Chuck Colson gave on this. He said they kind of stumbled on this evangelistic opportunity in the prisons and they decided on Mother's Day to offer to every prisoner who came to the service a free Mother's Day card to send out to their mothers, plus they provided the stamp as well. The crowd was overwhelming at that service. He thought how great that was and said they would do it again on Father's Day. On Father's Day nobody came to the service. So, Chuck put a team together to find out why they had such an overwhelming response on Mother's Day and such a paltry, insignificant response on Father's Day. He said the message was consistent so they quit after talking with 4 or 5 of the guys. In response to why they didn't want the Father's Day card they said number one they didn't know their father and two if they did, they would probably kill them for he never had anything to do with their life and they were considered a throw away. It was interesting how universal that response was throughout the prison population.

The government did a study on this as well. The study cost \$29 million dollars. The basic finding came back and was read on the floor of Congress. Notice the politically correct language. "We have discovered through this survey a significant factor; that children seem to do better when they grow up in a home with two adult persons committed to them." They can't bring themselves to say a father and a mother. I think I could have saved the government \$29 million dollars on that for that one wouldn't have been hard at all.

The reason we don't have children until Genesis 4 is because you don't have marriage until Genesis 3. In fact, I believe God embraces the song I used to sing in the first and second grade – first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage. The order is appropriate and that is the order – the commitment, the covenantal relationship, and then the blessing of children. That is the order that God has put into place and it's also here in Ephesians 6.

Ephesians 1 through 3 gives a Gospel distillation around a marvelous phrase that Paul loves and it's called 'in Christ.' If you ever want shorthand for the Gospel it's 'union with Christ.' We are in Christ and Christ is in us and that is the mystery revealed, the hope of glory. Right with God and God right within us. We have this intimate, secured, sanctified relationship through the atoning work of Christ on the cross and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. In those three chapters Paul uses the phrase 'in Christ' 28 times – 'in the beloved,' 'Christ in you,' 'in Christ.'

Then Paul turns to the Christian life in Ephesians 4. In light of all that he said in Ephesians 1 through 3 he then says in Ephesians 4:1, *[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.* It's not a manner worthy to be called because we can't, but a manner worthy of your calling. Then he lays out the Christian life – put off..., put on..., put off..., put on...etc. Don't steal, go to work and give. Don't lie, speak truth in love.

Then Paul goes to relationships and first goes to the church in worship – speaking the truth in love to one another, letting the Word of Christ dwell richly within you, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Then he moves from the church to marriage, from

the institution of redemption to the institution of creation – husbands love your wives, lead them as a servant and sacrificially. Wives you're the helper completer, don't compete with your husband, submit, come along side of him, respect him and you complete him as you embrace him with submission. The first wife, Eve, came from the side of Adam because that's where she fits and that's the closest to his heart. Then in this marriage we're now ready to go from Ephesians 5:22-33 to parenting in Ephesians 6.

Given that parenting is in the physical provision and nurturing and the spiritual development of child in the hands of the stewardship, I don't parent hoping I'm good enough for God to be at work in the lives of my children. I don't parent to get a promise and the attention of God. I have already gotten the promise from God as a believer. God says 'I will be a God to you and to your children after you. (Genesis 17:7)' Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household (Acts 16:31). The promise is for you and your children and all who are far off even as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself (Acts 2:39). So as we are physically providing, nurturing, protecting, feeding them, exercising them and getting their rest, then spiritually doing the work of evangelism and discipleship in their life with a God glorifying, Christ exalting effort at parenting that is Gospel saturated, now He directs us as to what we are doing.

I love the Psalmist and this will be the third text I will talk with you about, but I want to anticipate it. Psalm 127:3-4 says [3] *Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.* [4] *Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth.* We are raising our children to be arrows in the hands of the Divine Warrior – Christ. What a glorious stewardship we have! Our children are not about us and our children don't exist for us. Not only must marriage not become an idol, yet honored and sanctified. Family must not become an idol, yet honored and sanctified. Our children must not become an idol, but sanctified to the Lord and we are stewards in our parenting of them.

As our children progress through the seasons of life in this physical and spiritual maturity, there are seasons of our parenting as well. I have no text except antidotally and looking at parenting throughout Scripture, then examining it in the lives of 40 plus years of pastoring so I will give it to you as I see it. Here are the five seasons in the life of a parent as you parent your children.

Number one, you start out humanly speaking, in control. Your children are dependent on you and you begin to instruct them, not with suggestions, but with commands (number two). Here is the way we will eat at the dinner table. Here is how we are going to talk to each other in this home. Here are the ways we are going to function. You lay out the commands with clarity. When you have commands of what has to be done in the context of a family, keep them few, but keep them. Thirdly, you then start becoming a coach in the life of your child as you are coaching them through their seasons of life. Fourthly, you then move to giving them counsel. When does this all take place? I don't know all about control and command but to say it doesn't last very long. Then coaching takes over and then as they move off maybe not prior to marriage, but as they get out into the world, go off college, join the military, or whatever it might be, you then move into a counseling role in their life. Fifthly, particularly after marriage, you are then the ever-ready consultant. You learn how not to intrude but to always be there when they want to speak with you.

If we raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and do not do it in a way that provokes anger and that doesn't mean your child is always going to like you, your objective as a parent is not to be your child's friend. If it is, you will not be a good parent. You

have to give that up. Here is the carrot at the end of that stick; if you will give up your need to be their friend in order to be what they need, which is a parent, there will come a day you will become best friends and they will thank you for waiting for it. They will thank you for being their father or mother. As you are being their parent, they are going to get mad at you. What Paul is speaking of in this matter of not provoking your child to anger is do not create the anger that comes from a lack of affection, attention and clarity.

Confusion, chaos and absenteeism creates the anger of a life adrift, so you are giving the anchors, the environment, the discipline and instruction of the Lord. You give it with control. You make sure the environment is in place. We have a home, food, we're providing, I'm there, present, I'm talking, you give commands with clarity and the consequences of a lack of obedience with clarity. You learn how to affirm obedience and how to appropriately proportionately disobey. Then you learn how to coach them through the decision-making portions of their life. As they leave you counsel and as they leave and cleave you become the consultant.

I remember talking with one parent not long ago and they said to me 'I just don't think my son should be dating yet' and I said 'how old is he?' Their response was 'he is a junior in high school.' I said 'First of all, I'm not going to enter into the debate on courtship and dating for I'll cover that at another time.' But in the context of the vocabulary that was being used I said 'so that means he is going to be going to college in about a year, so you want his first decision of what to do and who to do it with on a courting engagement or a date to first happen 200 miles away from you or at your house? Coach and teach him through this for these are learning moments where you can be there when they stub their toe or fall flat on their face.'

There are five things you must remember in parenting that are presupposed in Ephesians 6. The first one is your child is not a blank tablet when they are born for they are born with a sin nature – they are born sinners. When we baptize children here at Briarwood the first vow I say to the parents in front of the congregation is 'do you acknowledge that your child is in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?' In other words, I'm asking you if you acknowledge that your child is a depraved sinner. Another way to put this, is this covenant child is a viper in diapers for they are born in rebellion against God. Realize your children are not starting in neutral, but also realize you have God's promises and precepts.

The second principle is God has given you His promises and precepts as a believer in the family of God. God's work of redemption embraces the family. We will end this part on parenting and the family in the Old Testament that anticipates the coming of Jesus. It tells us that this Jesus will do great things and one of them is He will turn the hearts of fathers to their home. God's promises and precepts will be at work in the lives of the parents and their children and those promises and precepts are true and amen in Christ.

Number three, your objective as parents is conversion in the life of your children. You have a heart focus. You're not trying to raise a Pharisee. Yes, you can say 'we're going to do this but not that' but what you are aiming at is not the external washing of the cup. You are aiming at what is filling the cup – you're aiming at the heart.

Number four, your family needs to make use of your extended family. I love family meals and family time together – immediate family and extended family. I love families embedded in God's family. Our family is in God's family – His church – and His family is in our family – spiritual uncles and aunts, spiritual grandfathers and grandmothers are of inestimable value to you as a parent. I want my children exposed to them in the context of Christ's church.

Fifthly, you have to have a God centered approach to parenting, not a child centered approach to family. I just shared that your child is born with a sin nature and what is a sin nature? A sin nature is 'it's all about me.' If your family revolves around your children then you have just reinforced the sin nature. Tell your child 'We love you but this family doesn't revolve around you.'

I want to give you an illustration of this from my life and I wished I could tell you that it led to my salvation but it didn't, although it did get my attention. My dad was not home much during the spring time of the year because he was in minor league baseball so he was gone for some extended periods of time. I took advantage of that in causing great distress to my mother and when my dad would get home it meant a trip up to the bedroom for me. My dad had not heard you weren't supposed to use corporal punishment and so I knew what was coming. I vividly remember being in the ninth grade and he said to me 'Son, go get the rod.' When I brought it back to him, he said to me 'This is the last time for I'm tired of coming home and seeing your mother the way she is and I'm not going to do it again. If you continue to do this, I have called the Stonewall Jackson Reformatory School and they have a place for you reserved and that is where you will go. This home doesn't revolve around you. I loved your mother and I married her and you are a blessing from that but you will not destroy that.'

That was a marvelous wake-up call in my life for it got my attention. I have never forgotten that. As I look back on that moment, I could tell it was done out of love and I could tell it was out of priorities. I could tell I was not the center of this home. It was going to be the Lord and the priorities of life that He had established. I didn't thank the Lord on that day but ever since then I have thanked the Lord that that was communicated to me. Now, try to find how to do it a better way, but make sure your children know your home does not revolve around them but that this home revolves around the Lord, Himself. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. We give You praise and thanksgiving for our God is glorious. Our God is great. Our God's grace is marvelous and in this day without the cultural allies in place, help us in the body of Christ build families in and for Christ, based upon the promises, guided by Your precepts and seeing Your glorious work in the lives of our children for which there is no greater joy than to see our children walking in the truth, in Jesus' Name, Amen.