

Foundations For Marriage and Family (part 1)

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[0:00] In it. So as I was thinking about what I might be able to focus on this morning, I thought I would take! that same topic, not so much the providence of God in that area, but the topic, some of the foundations! of marriage and family. Now why do I want to do that? Well certainly it's a topic that we hear more and more about throughout the news in our day. The challenge in regard to what marriage and family really is, it's quite disturbing to many of us I'm sure. In our country there is an ongoing rebellion against God's design for marriage. There's 13 states now that recognize same-sex marriage.

Something else that I found interesting as I was doing some additional reading and research on this topic. A resource that I grew up to trust was Webster's Dictionary. If you wanted to understand what something was, you just go to the dictionary and look up that definition and you could trust it. Well, in the 2003, I think, edition of Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the definition of marriage, number one, the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law. Number two, the state of being united to a person of the same sex in a relationship like that of a traditional marriage. So you're going to have to be careful even sending your children to the dictionary to find out what the meaning of certain terms are as we continue on in our culture. But not even when it comes to same-sex relationships, but even among heterosexual couples there's a growing disregard for marriage and that really isn't anything new. It's just within the last year and a half or so as I made transition from our ministry-related life and responsibilities to a job in the manufacturing sector of our country. I kind of stepped back into a situation and culture that I hadn't been in for quite a while. And I usually tell people it was really kind of refreshing.

Most of my life job have been in Christian settings. So to be back into that kind of situation was, again, what I call something of a refreshing challenge to be in that type of culture. But that also meant seeing what I hadn't seen so much, seeing it that closely. As many of the individuals I work with just aren't married, they live together as couples. And so that was interesting as well. So there is a disregard even for marriage among heterosexual couples. In fact, an article I saw in World Magazine, a quote from that, the median age at which women first give birth, 25.7 years, now falls below the median age at first marriage, 26.5. That's because 48% of all first births now come outside the conforming or comforting bounds of a two-parent family. One reason for this crossover is clearly declining faith in the cross. Fewer people believe what God teaches about marriage. And so we have that emphasis within our culture, something that certainly should concern us. But another reason why I decided to focus on this topic, the need for Christians to be reminded of the fundamentals of God's design for marriage, especially living in this kind of culture. We can't get away from the fundamentals. Even you hear that among professional sports teams as they prepare, whatever. They never forget the fundamentals because they need to perform those fundamentals in the challenging times so that they can be successful as a sporting team. So if you want to bring that over to the marriage relationship, we can never stray and forget the fundamentals if we really want to be successful and enjoy what God has designed for us to enjoy in marriage and family. So we want to be reminded of those fundamentals to make sure we don't shift from the full scope of God's design and begin to pick and choose certain aspects of his design we want to practice in our marriages. And this can happen to us from outside influences certainly as I've already mentioned a couple. But it can also happen when we yield to inner deceitful desires and set up idols within our own hearts. When we want to go a certain way in order to get it. When we want to get our marriage, we want to be reminded of those fundamentals.

[5:25] We want to deny what is true of, in this case, the fundamentals of God's design for marriage. So it's always good to be reminded of those fundamentals. And because Christians that

are married are not perfect people. I think we can all say, as Jim says, amen to that. It doesn't take long to be married to realize that this person that prior to your marriage and your engagement you thought was so close to being perfect, now you realize, we're not as perfect as I thought he was. You know, I've got some changing to doing this person's life. So, and that continues on throughout marriage. Carol and I will be celebrating our 41st year of marriage, this coming August. And while we have grown as believers and matured, and that certainly has helped us in our marriage, we still have those struggles. Lou and I were talking about some of the struggles of old age. He's a little older than I am yet this morning.

But the old age brings on its own challenges. And if we're not prepared to meet those challenges, even after being married for 41 years, by remembering some of the fundamentals that God has established for a successful marriage and family, well, even after 41 years or 50 years, whatever, that's just the magic number of years, aren't going to sustain you and produce within your marriage that lasting joy and steadfastness and happiness and God-glorifying relationship that we can enjoy. So, reasons for the topic for these next couple weeks. And as our brother last Sunday, Carol and I mentioned, when Chris Santiago was preaching both morning and evening, you could tell he had more information that he could get in. Well, I'm in that same situation this morning, even given two weeks. So I might fly along here a little bit, or we might save it for another time in the future. So where do we start when we consider some of these fundamentals of marriage and family? Well, I think we start with the origin of family. So some of the things that I'll focus on will be a little different, we'll say, than some of the things you might consider when talking about marriage and family. But I think if we don't establish a strong theological, doctrinal foundation, then really our foundation won't be strong enough to carry us through one year of marriage, to say anything of 40 or 50 years of marriage in a way that would honor and glorify God. So we want to consider origin of this institution of family. Certainly it isn't a result of evolution. We're going to have to delve into that very much in this group of people. It isn't the result of a committee discussion and decision from years and years ago. So many people populating in the world, and they finally concluded, listen, I don't know who belongs to who here. We've got to come up with some sort of system so that I know who's mine and whatever. Or, you know, we won't continue on. So why don't you pick her, and you live with her, you pick him, and hey, this works pretty good.

No, if that was the case, then, you know, this whole matter of relationships and marriage and family would certainly switch and wouldn't be applicable throughout the whole world. But indeed it is. And so, but we have to conclude, well, why is it? Why is it something that cuts across cultural boundaries so that when we went to South Africa, we could still open the Word of God and present to a different group of people, a different culture, the same pattern, the same design, and expect that it would work there just as it will work here? Well, it's because of where its origin is found.

[9:47] So, we consider this whole matter of origin. Of course, for that, we go to Genesis 1.1. If you want to turn in your Bibles to that chapter. Again, these are familiar verses to you, but we do want to read these anyways. Genesis 1.1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And this, of course, is the summary verse introducing us to who it was that brought all things into existence.

And then the verses following list those different things that God created in the beginning, whether it's light, the heavens, dry land, vegetation, so on and so forth. And those are the things that we'd be familiar with. But as we get down in chapter 1 to verses 26 through 28, we begin to see something of God's design, the beginnings of family. Starting with verse 26 of chapter 1, then God said, let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So, God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground. Then over to chapter 2, verses 18 through 24, a little bit more information on this. Verse 18, the Lord God said, it's not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air, and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam, no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. And while he was sleeping, he

took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. And the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man. For this reason, the man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. So from these two passages, we see the progression of the development of the family. God made Adam first, and Adam was alone, and then that was not good. And certainly there was something about Adam being in this condition of being alone that was not good. And what was that? Well, certainly he couldn't fulfill the commission to multiply and fill the earth that was coming. He couldn't fulfill the commission to rule over and subdue the earth, just being as one individual. He couldn't glorify God to the fullness of God's plan if Adam remained alone. God is a relational being. We'll take a look at a little bit more of this later on. But in order to display that aspect of God's nature, there needed to be more than one individual.

And also, he couldn't picture God's relationship to his people, a relationship that exists between Christ and the church, which we'll take a look at a little bit more later on as well. So out of God's great wisdom, his love for his glory, and certainly man's well-being and his joy in the world that God created, he took the next step of his great plan and provided the solution to man's aloneness. And God fashioned the woman. He knew exactly what was needed.

He knew what was exactly that was needed to erase our aloneness in order for us to be fruitful and multiply, in order for us to be able to subdue and have dominion over the earth, in order for us to glorify God, certainly as a relational being, but in many other ways as well that again we'll take a look at later on. In order for him to picture that relationship that is to exist between, that would exist between Christ and the church. So God made woman and brought her unto the man. And the first family was established. Now there weren't any children yet, so that doesn't mean that there were no families. You know, children just extend the family. It's not that a couple is not a family. You know, I find it interesting that when there's a couple, husband and wife, and somebody asked, when are you going to start your family? And I think, well, I already did, you know. On August 5th, 1972, we started our family. And after that, our family was extended later on when we had our daughter, Joanna, and then our daughter, Jody.

[15 : 11] So think of family as that couple, the husband and wife. And that God designed that family. So this was all designed by God. It all originated with God. It was his idea. Now, why is that important?

Now we start thinking, okay, this is very briefly, you know, the theological foundation of the origin of family and marriage. So what? Why is that family? Why is that important? Why? And how do we call that, or how does calling that to our memory throughout our week help us successfully in our marriage relationships? I mean, I'll have to admit, probably the first 10 years of my marriage, I never thought, well, let's see, marriage originated with God. Therefore, I should do this, or I shouldn't do that.

Now, we had very little marriage counseling before we got married, maybe an hour or two at the best. And that's not because we already had it down. We went into marriage very weak in understanding these even foundational truths that were necessary. But certainly God, by his grace, has brought us into contact with people, writers that really helped us and continue to help us grow and to be able to enjoy marriage as God designed it. Well, let's think about the application. You think too with me along this line. Since it originated from God, we have to remember the design is founded upon his infinite wisdom. We don't have the wisdom to come up with a better design. We certainly are finite creatures. Romans 11, 33 through 36, oh, the depth and riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord? Who became his counselor? Or who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again?

[17 : 32] So there was nobody back there outside of God, three in one, to counsel him. Well, no, no, you better not design it this way. It would be better if it was designed this way. I think that would work so much better, especially when you think about the culture in the United States so many thousands of years down the road.

This is really what should be included and extended beyond what you've already designed here. No. God didn't need that. He was infinite in wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. He knows

everything necessary to design that which will accomplish his purposes.

I mean, is that, if you don't carry that into your difficulties of marriage, you might start questioning, you know, what's going on here and how I handle this situation, how I handle and live with this man or how I live with this woman and what I do with her, what I do with him on a day-by-day basis. We're understanding that God in his infinite wisdom, knowledge, and understanding had no need of additional counsel because there was nothing that he would miss and nothing that he would not know that would make this design somewhat flawed in some way. So what we pursue daily in our marriage relationship is based on the very character of God and the infinite wisdom that he has. Another reason or thought we can carry through day by day. He has designer rights to determine the design. We have no right to change the design.

[19:17] Romans 11 again. All things. Here's one of those times when all means all, all the time.

And so, when we consider that and we approach marriage on a daily basis, well, this is to him. He's the designer. He has designer rights over how this marriage is to work day by day.

Deuteronomy 10.14 To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth, and everything in it. Everything in it belongs to God.

Nehemiah 9.6 You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry hosts. The earth and all that is on it. The seas and all that's in them.

You get the comprehensive nature of what he's talking about here. Everything in it. Belongs to the Lord. Psalm 89.11 The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth.

[20:22] You founded the world and all that is in it. Boy, on and on we go. There's other passages I could read here. Hebrews 2.10 is another one.

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God for whom and through whom everything exists. You see, this emphasizes this whole concept, this whole idea at different times and in different settings, different contexts.

He keeps going back to this whole matter of where did it originate from? And when they determine, and he emphasizes that it all originated with God, made by God, made through him, made for him. Therefore, this truth has impact on the certain situation that the writer was writing to them about.

And so the same is true for us in our marriage relationships.

Day by day, very practical, whatever's happening during the day. We could bring this truth in here and be reminded, now listen, I didn't design it.

[21:23] It didn't originate with me. Therefore, I can't change it now just because of these circumstances or just because of the way I feel. That's not my right.

It's God's right as the designer and maker of all things. So many times in Scripture, when people are turning from God in his ways, maybe elevating themselves as sovereign, and that's what we have to make it out to be, the writers of Scripture emphasize God is creator, to make the point that man is not sovereign or in charge.

And so we submit to him and his design. We don't come up with a new design and expect him to acquiesce to us. We aren't in charge. He's the creator. We're the creature.

And that includes submission to God to the full scope of his design and how we function. Now, let me explain that a little bit.

Now, let me read this one other statement. If we don't submit to the full scope of God's design in marriage family, then we're indicating by how we function that we are sovereign and we can change God's design.

[22:41] Now, that probably happens to us more than what we realize or at least want to admit. But, you know, it would be easy for us when we see the news coverage on same-sex marriage.

Oh, that's wrong. You know, that shouldn't be. That's not God's design. But again, when I'm beginning to struggle a little bit with something that maybe Carol's doing or expecting, and I begin to shut down and withdraw, and she asks me what's wrong.

Nothing's wrong. I'm okay. You know, I've all of a sudden become sovereign in this marriage relationship because I'm conducting and pursuing my role in a different way than it was designed by God.

I mean, that's what we've got to do, and that's what I'm trying to encourage us to do this morning, is take it down to those very practical moments and incidences in our marriage relationship day by day.

Because if these truths don't affect us in the day by day, just in the big events, well, you know, what's the value? But in reality, this design is meant for the day by day.

[23 : 55] We live most of the time in the very mundane events of life. And there's a lot of those that say mundane, simple events of life that make up our 24 hours.

And so we have to think of these foundational truths as certainly having application in every one of those moments of our life.

Or again, if we don't, then the foundation certainly will be weak. And we're saying something about the God who designed them and what we believe about these truths that he's established as well. And also saying something about ourselves that we have no right to say. So really thinking about the application of this whole matter of the origin of marriage being in God.

Let me give you another reason and why it's good to think on. Marriage, family originating with God in a day by day basis.

[25 : 07] And what we conclude. Because what we conclude is based on that. Again, on who God is and his ability to design what he's designed.

So what can we conclude about marriage and family? Because it's based on and has its origin in God. Well, number three, it's very good.

In Genesis 1.31, God saw that he had made and behold, it was very good. So when God designs and makes something, it doesn't have any flaws or imperfections.

The design is good and it doesn't need to be changed. Understanding this, when we experience problems in marriage, we can't conclude, there's something wrong with the design.

If we do, then the spouse or the couple together will respond differently. Because to deny a certain truth here means there's something so important that I want to get or want to hold on to that I'm willing to deny this truth.

[26 : 18] And any time we do that, it's going to lead us down a sinful path. Either in what we're thinking, because we're already thinking wrong, thinking sinfully. And any time we do that, it's going to lead us down this path of acting.

For out of the heart, man speaks and lives. And so we start with this truth that marriage is very good.

And we should conclude that, to say, if we are having problems, since it isn't a design problem, we can conclude that it must be me or my spouse or both of us and how I or we aren't conforming to the design or working the design.

Now that's very helpful when we're approaching these problems. Because any time there's a problem that has surfaced in all kinds of situations, you're trying to get to the bottom of the problem. And so many times what you're doing is trying to eliminate, well, it can't be this and it can't be that. You know, I'm not Mr. Electrical or Mr. Mechanical, but any time I've seen guys work on those kind of things, they start eliminating things in order to determine, well, what is the problem so that they can really get to the problem and actually fix it so that whatever it is begins functioning effectively.

[27 : 45] And then I'm ready to go again and enjoying whatever it is that has been broken. And so it is with marriage and family problems that we have.

We can first of all eliminate the matter of it being a faulty design. It's not that. Now, if we're not willing to conclude that, then we know that there's another problem in how I'm approaching this whole matter, this situation.

But if we don't start with this foundational truth, then we'll just funnel around with all these other things. And maybe it is mechanics would see me working on something that would drive them to frustration.

Why aren't you going over here? This is where the problem is. Why are you fighting? Well, this is easier. It's easier to work on this part over here. If I get over here, then that's going to get my hands dirty.

It's just going to cause greater problems. So let's just deal with this over here. You think, man, that's not going to fix it. And that's true.

[28 : 58] And so why do we do that in marriage relationships when we ignore what is true? Hey, let's just go back over here. Let's go to the real problem. The real problem is me and what I want so badly that I'm willing to act in such a way, sinful way, in order to get it.

And, you know, if I'm doing that, there's no joy. It's not going to be fixed. It's just a matter of time before it breaks again in another way. And on and on we go.

So the importance of understanding the importance that or the truth that it is very good. So as we contemplate the origin of marriage and family and the implications of that, we can be hopeful. And I say that we can be hopeful of enjoying marriage, family, and move successfully even through the difficulties because you can never eliminate the difficulties.

To try and eliminate the difficulties will lead to difficulties and will only cause more frustration and problems. And so you recognize what, you know, there's challenges that happen.

[30 : 09] How can you really be prepared for those challenges? These are certainly some things that Carol and I could have enjoyed as good foundation blocks when we started our marriage almost 41 years ago.

Even for an individual believer that's married maybe to an unsafe spouse. Well, certainly the unsafe spouse is not going to conform to the biblical standard.

Maybe by the common grace of God there will be a certain amount of that. They have no heart toward God that's going to want them to really learn these truths and give themselves to these truths.

Well, does that mean that the safe spouse can never live in the joy of the Lord? No, that doesn't mean that at all. They just commit themselves to being God's kind of husband or wife in that situation and find their joy in being God's kind of person glorifying Him to that spouse in that situation.

I mean, that's our ultimate joy in whatever we're doing. And it's not dependent upon what the other person does or who that other person is in that case.

[31 : 19] I'm not advocating marrying unbelievers, certainly. You understand that. So, contemplate origin of marriage as you move through the week this week and use that and see how that affects some of the decisions you make and how you approach certain aspects of your marriage relationship and your family life.

But we also need to contemplate beyond origin, contemplate purpose. Because after we've established this whole matter of origin, then we have to contemplate and think about, well, purpose. What's the purpose of that which God designed? Every designer has a purpose for that which He has designed. And we all understand that, certainly.

And, in fact, we ask the question when we see something or find something that we're not quite familiar with, we say, oh, what is this?

Where did this come from? I wonder what this is for. I don't know if they still publish it. Country Magazine, do they still publish Country Magazine? On Country Magazine, there was a certain section in there that people would send in a picture of something that they found.

[32 : 36] They didn't know what it was. And so they were asking other people to look at it and write back in, tell us what it is and what its purpose is. You see, all those things go together.

The frustrating thing for me was they didn't always answer in the following editions what it was. And so I was left, I don't know what it is. But we're made that way in pursuing those questions and answers to questions like that.

And so it is with marriage. And as we get on board, whether it's with marriage or these other things, with the designer's purposes, we enjoy what he's designed.

But if we stray from the purposes and how we use what he's designed, then we're certainly going to forfeit the blessings and the enjoyment that we could have had. You don't buy a Rolls Royce.

None of us buy Rolls Royces. But if you did, you wouldn't buy it to plow the field or you wouldn't use it for off-road racing. That's not what it's designed for.

[33 : 43] If you did, then you'd forfeit the pleasures that would be yours if you used it according to its design. And again, so it is with marriage and family.

So let's consider God's purposes for marriage and family. And so where do we begin? Well, we begin, what is man's purpose for all he does?

To glorify God. And what's the Westminster Catechism say? Yeah, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. John Piper puts a little twist on it by saying the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever.

So how would you describe what it means to glorify God? Give me some of your thoughts. You're going to tell your children or somebody else, you know, your purpose is to glorify God.

Well, if I told that to my grandchildren, they might wonder, what do you mean? So what do we mean? What are some of your phrases that you would use or one words that would explain what

that means to glorify God?

[34:55] He's number one. All right. What else? Okay, to praise His attributes.

So now we even have to break that down a little bit more. Okay. So I can praise God's attributes.

Well, what do you mean? What does that mean?

Help me understand it more specifically. We've got two concepts there, the praise and His attributes. So focus on the praise.

Break that down for me. Thankfulness. Okay. How do you express thankfulness?

You're telling your kids, be thankful. Okay. What do you mean? What's that going to look like? What am I supposed to do, Mom, Dad? Acknowledge Him in all your ways.

[35:56] Well, what do you mean, Mom, Dad? Acknowledge Him in all my ways. How do I do that? Okay.

Certainly it has to start within our thinking. So we're going to help our children. The other person begin thinking. Of course, we had talked about praising Him for His attributes. So it's not going to be thinking about baseball or whatever else.

Although you could bring God's attributes even into that. for from Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. But, Jim? Okay.

Giving thanks to Him also in bad times. Of course, we understand that that would be a verbal giving of thanks to God in your situation instead of, oh man, what is this always happening?

That's not giving thanks. Instead, we're going to express thank you, God, that in the midst of these circumstances your love for me is constant and steadfast.

[36:56] Thank you, God, that there's wisdom in your Word that I can draw from to help me in these circumstances. And so you're drawing, you're praising God for His attributes in those circumstances.

And so, you know, on and on we could go. I said, in love for God you declare through your words you show forth in your actions that which is true, excellent, and impressive, you know, about God, His character, His attributes that we've talked a little bit about as you live in satisfaction of who He is.

So by faith in Jesus Christ we've come to know God to some degree and find that He is the treasure, He is the satisfaction of all that I am made to be.

And as a result of that satisfaction, now I live every day in submission to Him and by His counsel and truth and thereby declare what is impressive and show forth what is impressive about God.

And there's so many things that are excellent, impressive about God. He's Lord of all, faithful, wise, powerful, united, in loving relationship with Himself, forgiving, long-suffering, holy.

[38:13] so how do I live in marriage so as to show forth these characteristics of God as we live in the reality of who He is?

Certainly, He is esteemed and praised and revered. Let me just finish with some of these verses.

Matthew 5, 16, in the same way, let your light shine before men.

You have to help your children understand, well, what do you mean let my light shine? They explain it a little bit that they may see your good deeds and the result, praise your Father in heaven.

Romans 15, 7, accept one another then just as Christ accepted you in order to bring praise to God.

I mean, that was the motivation of Jesus Christ. We're thinking, okay, this is my purpose now in this relationship that I am with my spouse. I mean, even if we've entered this relationship for some sinful, selfish purpose, you know, they make me happy, you know, I'm esteemed as a person because someone else has accepted me so I like being with this person or I feel more important when I'm with this person and they're fun, you know, make life fun and there's going to become a time when he's not going to esteem you very well.

There's going to be a time when marriage is not going to be real fun and so on and so forth. So if those are the building blocks you started on, then you're going to have to crumble those, push those aside and start building on something that's much more solid that will carry you through the years that God gives you in marriage.

[39:49] Whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. So next week we'll pick it up from here and try and consider well what does that look like in marriage and family?

And I had an example here from the Wall Street Journal this past week of what it doesn't look like that I found very interesting but I'm out of time this morning so I didn't get anywhere near as far as I thought I would but as you pursue marriage, family this week consider some of these things and

begin seeing well how is this going to affect me in this situation?

If I was going to give you an assignment I'd say come back next week with five examples of how you contemplated these truths and how they influenced the decision that you made and how you acted in that situation but I won't do that so let's close in prayer.

Father this morning we do give thanks for who you are. You are the God of all wisdom. You are a God who is loving, compassionate, holy, good in all your ways and Father in your design first of all in salvation you've made it such that we could come and know you and enjoy you and what you've designed even as sinners we rebelled against that and ran full speed away from it and even at times still Father in deceitful loss we've given to them and pursue things that are not for your glory and certainly not for our good so we'd ask that you by your Holy Spirit and the word that we've taken a look at this morning that you would help us this morning in all our frailty and still some of that humanness with who we are in Christ Jesus now that you would help us walk in newness of life walk as redeemed people Father in our relationships in particular this morning as it relates to marriage and family so that we could be people so very different people that show forth the glory the goodness and greatness of who you are and we can enjoy you more in the reality of who you are as we relate and live with each other so accomplish that for your namesake and certainly our well-being and the well-being of many who are yet outside of Christ and this design in Jesus name Amen Thank you you are dismissed