

Foundations For Marriage and Family (part 2)

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[0:00] Okay, we do want to continue sharing what I've been calling some of the foundations for marriage and family. There may be other foundation stones that God has established in His Word that we can look to for successful marriages and families.

These are just some of the ones that I've put together that have assisted us through the years and that I thought would be good sharing with you. This morning as well.

If for some reason you want some of the notes that I've put together for these two weeks, just give your email address to Carol or me and we'll send them off to you.

And you can have those. But just for a quick recap on where we were last week, and again, these things I'm sharing out of a concern that kind of grew in me more and more over the past few months as we've been hearing more and more in the media or newspapers, magazines, wherever, of the different direction that our culture is taking, marriage and family.

And we hear those voices over and over and over again in so many different places. And it's interesting. One article that I read made mention of how the views of people in our country have changed over the years because of the repetition of these views of what marriage should be.

[1:33] And how these other groups and organizations have intentionally gone down this path of putting this new message, unbiblical message, before the public in this way through various media avenues.

And the result of that is that the idea that people have in our culture of marriage and other, let's say, options, have certainly shifted from the biblical perspective over the years.

And so as I heard that statistic and even heard it through different avenues and certainly with grandchildren coming up, I began wondering more and more, where are things going to be?

Even in my generation, we've seen this shift take place. And if we're not hearing the biblical voice over and over and over again, more than likely, it's a good possibility that if we're not careful, the same kind of shift can take place in our lives.

And that indeed has happened within, we'll say, the Christian community. And so we're very concerned about that because God has very specific designs for marriage and family and very specific purposes that he wants to accomplish that indeed are for our good and our enjoyment.

[3:01] And certainly, even after 41 years of marriage, I don't want to miss those. And I don't want my children to miss those. And I don't want my grandchildren to miss those.

But in order for that to happen, we have to be just as intentional in pursuing the truth and biblical foundation so that, again, we can enjoy those things.

So a quick recap of where we were last week, and I mean quick. We took a look at the origin of marriage and family. We have to start there.

The foundation begins with that. We ask the question, well, where did this come from? And that truly affects how we view what we want to build on, and in this case, marriage and family.

And the marriage family originated from God. And since it originated from God, the design is founded upon his infinite wisdom.

[4:03] We don't have the wisdom to come up with a better design. We are finite creatures. But God didn't miss anything. No details whatsoever. He didn't need to get counsel from other people.

In and of himself, he had all the wisdom, knowledge, understanding that was necessary to design something that would accomplish his purposes and be for the good of his creatures.

And so that should be a great confidence to us. One of the other things I wanted to emphasize was we want to make sure that we're drawing upon these truths in our daily meditations and thoughts when we are running across or running up against some of these challenges that will come in marriage, in relationships.

And what I'm finding is couples aren't bringing these truths to mind. I mean, the last time you had a conflict with your spouse, did it come to mind?

Okay, where did marriage originate? Originated from... We probably just don't think of those things. But I'm encouraging you. I think these are things that we do need to think about because they will affect the conclusions that we draw from our thoughts in those times, which will determine how we respond to our spouse in those difficulties and in those challenges.

[5 : 29] So that's what I'm encouraging you to do as well, bringing these thoughts to mind on a daily basis. Well, it's founded upon his infinite wisdom.

He has designer rights to determine the design. We have no right to change the design. And also, since it originated from God, it is very good.

When God designs and makes something, it doesn't have any flaws or imperfections. The design is good, again, and doesn't need to be changed.

And here's an area where we need to be careful because, again, if we're not used to making these thoughts our meditations, it's not like we're operating out of a vacuum in our minds in those different situations we're in.

We will respond out of the overflow of our heart, what's already in our heart and in our minds. And if it's not these things that are good and true, then again, we will respond in most likely a sinful way.

[6 : 37] So we have to start with this foundation that this God's design is very good. So I know that the design is not flawed when God says this in his word about how I'm supposed to be as a spouse in this situation.

The design is good, so I don't have to be concerned about that. So I do need to go someplace to determine why are we having this problem. So if that's eliminated, now I turn to me.

And obviously I've come to some wrong conclusions about what's going on here and therefore have responded sinfully or my spouse has or we both have.

And that's why these problems are developing because we're not experiencing the very good that God wants us to be experiencing. Well, after the origin of marriage, we wanted to answer that question of what is its purpose?

We know things that are designed have a purpose. And it's the same with God. And so we started looking at what his purposes are for marriage.

[7 : 49] And number one was to glorify God. In love for God, you declare and show forth that which is true, excellent, and impressive about God as you live in satisfaction of who he is.

By faith in Jesus Christ, you've come to know God and be in relationship with him. You have a new ambition to live for his glory. You're growing to know who he is and find that he is the one that truly satisfies.

All these other things in life that I thought would be the source of satisfaction and happiness in me are not the priority. They are things that he has designed for me to richly enjoy but not to replace him.

And so I want to be sure that I am enjoying him. And by faith in Jesus Christ, we start down that path of knowing him, enjoying him for who he is.

And then out of that satisfaction, that love for him, we begin delving into his word, having minds that are renewed.

[8 : 55] And out of those renewed minds, speaking things that are true and good and pleasing, doing things that are good, true and pleasing to him, and show love to, in this case, my spouse.

So in that way, we're glorifying God in marriage. And so we start thinking about who he is. Well, on the basis of who he is, how do I glorify him in marriage?

And this is where last week we were sharing back and forth some of the things that are true of God. Of course, he's Lord of all, sovereign, faithful, wise, powerful.

He's united in love and relationship with himself, forgiving God, long-suffering, on and on we could go. So even as I quickly ran through those things, you're thinking throughout the week, okay, how does what I know is true about God, how is that to be manifested through my life and my relationship with my spouse this week?

And what would work against that? And we laughed last week's lesson by saying, well, I was going to give you an example of what it isn't. And then I ran out of time.

[10 : 11] And I was just going to just go ahead and forget that character. Oh, no, you can't leave him hanging. Let him know that example. So as Paul Harvey says, here's the rest of the story.

For I think I'm still in a crowd that knows who Paul Harvey is. And if I was in the high school class, I might get some looks as to who was he. All right.

So that example, and I'm just going to be brief here. But if you want to look at this article further and its completeness, you would have to look. I think I tore that section off.

Wall Street Journal last week or the week before. I don't remember. But the title of the article was, The Nest is Empty, So Why Aren't We Having Fun Yet? So if you went through this article with your biblical glasses on so that you're looking through biblical lenses at what's going on here, you would have to determine, well, what is a good foundation, what is not, what indicates purpose that is biblical, what indicates purpose that is not biblical.

And on the basis of all that, what conclusion have they come to? And is that conclusion a good conclusion or is it not in what it accomplishes?

[11:28] But we won't do all that this morning. Just the introductory paragraph. Many people look forward to an empty nest when the kids finally move out so they can get back to all the fun things they used to do together as a couple before diapers, carpools, homework took over their lives.

And then they go through some statistics which are pretty enlightening and helpful, but statistics about how many people in their upper years, upper years, 50 and up, are experiencing divorces. And I think many of us probably know people where that has happened. And then they go on, many couples miss the warning signs that something is wrong.

People think that when spouses grow apart it's just because there's some big conflict or major divide. They say that's not the case. One of the biggest predictors of divorce, he says, is withdrawal. Then he gives some warning flares. When one spouse has to spend more time together or trying to ignite a dialogue about the relationship, the other person ignores it.

[12:37] Men often retreat to their hobbies. While women may disappear into child-rearing friendships, caregiving for elderly parents, on and on. Some complicating matters that I won't go into here.

But then they give this example of this couple. So listen and see if you can pick some things out about this couple. When their youngest child went away to college, Liz Stossel and her husband of 23 years almost stopped talking to each other.

Each woke at a different time. They ate breakfast alone, went to work. When they had dinner together, the conversation was a little more than updates on the three daughters.

He read in the living room. She spent time on her computer in the den. But in the past, when family, when other children were there, they ate dinner together, hiked, planted vegetable gardens, you know, lots of different things that they were doing together.

Seemed as if all our differences and issues that were forgotten when the kids were there suddenly sprang up again. When the kids were there, at least we did things together. I hope all these things are raising some red flags to you.

[13:51] After the kids were gone, they began to bicker more. He liked the house quiet in the evenings and complained when she had company. She harped on him to clean up his mess. They went to marriage counseling, discussed getting a divorce, agreed to wait until the youngest daughter graduated from college.

But they found an unusual solution. So those were the symptoms. And of course, everybody were designed to evaluate what's going on in our lives and to draw conclusions.

And so they're doing what people who are made in the image of God do. But they're doing it apart from biblical foundations. She didn't want to go on living with him.

She said, I'm not fun. And you are not fun. We're in each other's way. And they asked if they could go to counseling, maybe build an addition onto the house, trying to come up with some solution.

She didn't want a divorce. Instead, she wanted to reinvent their marriage by living separately. Mr. Stossel says he quickly realized his wife idea was a good one.

[14:59] I'd have my own house to myself, but wouldn't have to worry about making it look a certain way or what she would like or wouldn't like. And I could expand, unfold, feel free. And the couple went house hunting.

And of course, they found a house five miles away. And now six years later, after she moved out, they have dinner at her house on Monday and Tuesday, spend Wednesday evening alone, sleep over at one another's home Thursday through Sunday.

They go for regular long walks, have date nights. And then he says, hey, it's working pretty good. We don't try to impose anything on each other. We live without all the baggage. Our time together is much more intentional.

There's not the constant annoyance of being alone together, on and on and on. And the Wall Street Journal presents this as, here it is. Here's the solution. Here's a couple that had problems and they dealt with it.

And now, as the story goes, they lived happily ever, well, not together, happily ever after. One here, one there, and sometimes together. So, great, isn't it?

[16:07] What's wrong? Quickly, no time for silence here now. What do you pick out there? It wasn't always a design. God seen man needed a helper. Yeah, needed a helper.

Certainly wasn't a design. What was the key phrase? Did you pick out that key phrase that showed that she believed God wasn't the designer? Probably not. I read through it so quickly.

Yeah, reinvent. She wanted to reinvent. Like, hey, this is open to all kind of options here. No one above me, us. We are our own people.

And we can come up with a new design. The problem is the design. Wrong, wrong. But all that determines how we're going to come to conclusions in what we do in response.

So, they weren't bringing truth to bear on their situation. And as a result, they came up with these kind of conclusions and were not experiencing what was truly and is truly very good.

[17:08] They thought they had something that was really good. And that's why when we go to people and say, hey, wouldn't you like to be happy? Aren't you unhappy without Jesus in your life?

No, I'm happy. I'm just fine without him in life. Same thing with marriage. You know, they're not hitting the target for the purpose of marriage, which is to glorify God.

It's become their own personal satisfaction, happiness. Is God concerned about our happiness?

Well, yes, he is. But not above his glory. The two go together, really.

Amen. And so, we have to go on. There's many other things that we could discuss there. But they were living separate lives.

They weren't glorifying God in the oneness that they were establishing. You know, we can handle that very differently as Christians. And we can respond differently.

[18:05] In love for God and each other, we can learn to pursue oneness and not allow different interests to drive us apart. A Christian couple that we uniquely glorify God as we become one flesh.

One flesh refers to the physical union, of course, but also much more. The oneness a husband and wife develop comes from a total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with each other for life.

That comes from Wayne Mack's book. What was that one he wrote years ago? God. No, it was a different one. Sorry.

Yeah, it's gone. It's gone. Yeah. 62 years. Strengthen your marriage. Very good. Thank you, Harper. All right. So it's that kind of total commitment of the total person with each other for life. Each one in love for God and each other fulfill their God-designed role, just as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit fulfill each of their roles. So oneness in marriage is a husband and wife committed to developing and displaying something of the harmony and oneness that exists within the Godhead.

[19:22] And again, this is something, again, that lifts marriage to a higher purpose. As we begin thinking of these things, even through those practical situations day by day, when we start thinking about, oh, he left this on the floor again, and we start thinking about going back to him or her in a sinful way, we begin to think, well, what's at stake here?

Well, a clean house is at stake here. The pleasure I get from having a clean house. No, there's something far greater at stake here than the pleasure that you would get from a clean house.

Now, that might need to be dealt with in a biblical way, but its greater stake here is the oneness that you share as a couple and manifesting something of the harmony that exists within the Godhead.

So that's going to determine how you go to your spouse and deal with the situation. Is how you deal with the situation going to manifest that harmony that you want to protect and preserve, or is it going to work against that and drive you apart?

So again, that's where these come in, in a very practical way, I think, day by day, and we need to make them our meditation more and more.

[20:45] Well, we could spend more time on this topic of glorifying God, but we want to move on to some other purposes. Another purpose is to picture the relationship that exists between Christ and

the church.

And Ephesians 5, 22 through 33, we won't take time to read that passage. I think most of you will be familiar with the passage as I make some points.

Well, here God described the relationship between Christ and the church in Scripture, but he also planned that a living illustration would be helpful. This is where it's going to move us again to a higher view of what we're enjoying and experiencing in a marriage relationship.

And I've chosen to quote something from John Piper that I think really brings that up. In this Ephesians 5 passage, he says, After quoting Genesis 2, 24 about the man and woman becoming one flesh, Paul says, This is a great mystery, and I'm speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Marriage is a mystery. There's more here than meets the eye. What is it? I think it's this. God didn't create the union of Christ and the church after the pattern of human marriage, just the reverse.

[22:03] He created human marriage on the pattern of Christ's relation to the church. The mystery of Genesis 2, 24 is that the marriage it describes is a parable or symbol of Christ's relation to his people.

God doesn't do things willy-nilly. Everything has purpose and meaning. There we go. Everything has purpose and meaning, that design. When God engaged to create men and women and to ordain the union of marriage, he didn't roll dice or draw straws or flip a coin.

He patterned marriage very purposefully after the relationship between his son and the church, which he planned from eternity. And therefore, marriage is a mystery.

It contains and conceals a meaning far greater than what is seen on the outside. What God has joined together in marriage is to be a reflection of the union between the Son of God and his bride, the church.

Those of us who are married need to ponder again and again. It's that same importance. But how often do we ponder that again and again?

[23:10] Because again, what we ponder will determine the kind of conclusions we come to, which will determine the kind of actions we take day by day in very practical situations.

But we need to ponder again and again how mysterious and wonderful it is that we are granted by God the privilege to image forth stupendous, you see all these things he's saying, stupendous, divine realities infinitely bigger and greater than ourselves.

That's the deepest meaning of marriage. It's meant to be a living drama of how Christ and the church relate to each other. Now some of us might say, there's a lot of drama that's taking place in my home, but it's not this kind of drama.

Well, that's what redemption is all about. God has redeemed us that we might be transformed to the image of his son, that we might show forth what is excellent and magnificent about God.

And so we're taking every aspect of our lives and bringing that into the same sphere, our marriage relationship. We want our marriages to be redeemed in such a way that it's manifesting what is great and good and beautiful about this relationship that exists between Christ and his bride, the church.

[24:27] We've got to bring that in. You know, did my words in this situation reflect what is true of the church to Jesus Christ? No, the church would never have addressed.

I never would have addressed my Savior in that way. Or is the love I've shown to my wife in this situation, does it really reflect the love that Jesus Christ shows to his church and his bride?

No, it doesn't. Then it should have no part whatsoever. We're reflecting something, but it's certainly not that which is true and good and glorifying to God or good for us as individuals or as couples in this marriage relationship.

Well, again, we think, well, in what ways do we do this then? How does this become practical? Well, just relating to our roles, husbands in our redemption, we have the honor of living out headship that pictures Christ's headship to the church.

Just as Christ for the church, the husband has the privilege to display biblical love, leadership, and protection for his wife.

[25:43] And wives, in your redemption, you have the honor of living out submission that pictures the church's reverent submission to Christ. Just as the church for Christ, the wife has the privilege to show submission, suitable help, and a reverence for her husband.

Of course, we're going to need to understand what that is, what that does look like on a practical basis. And, of course, for that, again, you turn to the Word of God and find all the practical things you need to know in order to live that kind of relationship out in your marriage.

Well, what can a marriage relationship communicate about Christ in the church relationship? Again, just think about that with me, and hopefully you've tracked with me this far that you know where I'm headed.

But let's help each other. Just come up with a couple, two or three examples of how we can manifest and reflect the relationship that takes place between Christ and the church.

What is true in that relationship that I can manifest in a practical way day by day? Any thoughts on that? Okay, and so what did Christ and the church pursue together?

[27:10] What are they pursuing together that will bring forth this happiness and joy in relationship? Well, they seek the glory of God. That's what Jesus said in his prayer.

I've glorified you on the earth. Or in his other John 6 passages, my meat is to do the will of him who sent me. I always speak those things that are pleasing to him. So his ambition is to do the will of the Father.

Well, the ambition of the church is to do the will of the Father, to glorify God. And so in that way, we pursue that. We can reflect that day by day. What other ways can we manifest and reflect what is true between Christ's relationship and the church?

What's true of that relationship that you can manifest in your relationship? All right, yeah.

In honor of preferring one another, serving one another on a daily basis. Yeah, there it is on the floor again. I'm going to just pick that up today. And of course, if it's a habit, you're going to deal with that eventually.

[28:16] But it doesn't usually leave that laying around. I don't need to. I can serve. I can pick that up. And very practical. How about permanent love? Is that something that's true between Christ and the church?

Permanent love relationship? There's no God. There could be any threats in a marriage relationship. I've had it with you. I'm out of here. Christ would never say that to the church. And the church would never say that to Jesus Christ.

That should never be part of our communication when we're in difficult situations. because it doesn't accurately reflect the permanent love relationship that exists between Christ and the church.

One more. Anybody? Yes. Go ahead, Becky. Yeah. Yeah.

So again, we're going back to the biblical design, knowing that biblical design is good. One more. Mark? Yeah. Yeah.

[29:16] Yeah. And that's going to, we're going to need to understand what does that look like for my wife in particular. So I'm going to have to dwell with my wife according to understanding, to learn her, to understand her, to know her so that I can with wisdom and discernment lead on this path of growing in godliness and knowing God and being the person that God wants her to be.

These are all good examples, all examples we need to pursue and discuss more. But let's move on to another purpose in marriage. Provide the God-honoring relationship through which the husband and wife can bring forth children and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Here's again another area that needs some real redemption in our culture and even some real redemption among Christian families and how we view children.

They're not this burden that our article described at first. When can we get back to the fun and get rid of all these diapers and this caravan and so on and so forth.

If that's our perspective, then we have lost some understanding of God's purpose in marriage and family. This is definitely a huge responsibility.

[30:36] But it's also a great privilege God has granted to parents. He's entrusted parents with the honor of passing on His Word to the next generation, which they desperately need to know Him and live for His glory.

Again, think of that with my grandchildren. I mean, by God's grace, our children have a commitment to, and their husbands have a commitment to loving God and loving others.

They're growing just like we are still as we live in a sinful world, but as we see our country, what's going on in our country, and we see our grandchildren. We think more and more of the huge need that they have for something to build their lives on, a firm foundation.

And this nurturing in the Lord is not something that can happen on Sunday morning and Wednesday night and think that that's going to do it. It's not going to do it. They're going to hear a lot more voices out there that are contrary to the truth of God's Word more than twice a week. And so we have to become just as intentional as other voices in the world are, very intentional of what they're trying to accomplish in the lives of their listeners. We have to be just as intentional in this whole matter of nurturing our children in the Lord.

[31:51] And so we begin to look, okay, what does that look like? We've got to move from the very general principle to what it looks like. Because we don't have time for that this morning. But we're understanding the foundation here for a successful family, not just this immediate family, but future family as well.

But this nurturing process also provides children the truth they need to know God and know how to live for His glory. It equips children to fill next-generation family roles as they leave father and mother and cleave to his or her spouse.

It's the husband-wife relationship that's permanent. The children are there temporarily until they're independent or living on their own serving God or joined with another spouse serving God.

So the husband and wife need to guard and nurture the personal relationship, the permanent relationship. That's what that couple in our article didn't do. The family was built, their daily life was built around the temporary relationship.

Which, that's an important relationship. I think you understand where I'm going with that. But when the children were gone, they looked at each other and said, who are you? I don't know you.

[33:11] And how can you build anything lasting on that? You can't. They hadn't protected the permanent relationship which they needed to do. Another purpose, marriage provides the only avenue through which a man and woman and husband and wife can provide sexual pleasure to each other.

You talk about another distortion in our culture and around the world. This is another area in which sin has brought great distortion and devastation. But we, as God's redeemed people, must believe that this is part of what God described as very good and commit ourselves to thoughts, words, and actions that glorify Him in this area.

Again, this is an area that we don't get our views from the world on. We're going to end up even within our marriages as Christians as something that's very distorted and strange looking.

Very selfish. But God, in His Word, presents something far different. Sex and marriage involves a devotion to protect one another from temptation and satisfy each other's sexual desires.

Sex and marriage involves experiencing great pleasure in bringing delight to your spouse. In our culture, it's become all about what I get out of it. And there's a couple other quotes that I have here that are very good quotes that make the same point, but I need to finish up here.

[34:36] Another purpose is companionship. Proverbs 2, 16 and 17, the writer writes of the benefits of wisdom and he describes, well, this is what he says, it will save you also from the adulterers, from the wayward wife with her seductive words who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made with God.

When describing her relationship with her husband, he uses the words partner of her youth. It could also be translated friend or companion or guide, and it's the same way in Malachi 2, 14, uses that word partner, but there's many translations that use the word companion.

And even when we think of in the beginning in Genesis 2, 20, after the man gave names to all livestock, there was not found a suitable helper for him.

So the emphasis of these phrases is that at the beginning of their marriage with God as their witness, the husband and wife began their marriage journey as companions.

And this was not something they were to forsake, just as Christ never forsakes his bride, the church. So understanding and contemplating this should bring a new perspective on how each one treats the other and how they approach various challenges.

[35:59] it's about how we move through the various circumstances in marriage and life as companions. I would never do something that would hurt my companion.

We're headed in the same direction as I move through this situation, this set of circumstances with my spouse. What do we need to do in this situation to convey that we are in this together as companions?

This person is not my enemy. This is where we get to many times. We're in conflict. We see the other person as in conflict with me and conflict means enemy, one against.

But that's not the case. We're locked together arm in arm so we view this differently. This is not my enemy. We have a common enemy in Satan and flesh, sinful flesh and desires.

So we're going to look for solutions that would honor God and help us go through these situations as companions. Well, the last purpose is mutual edification.

[37 : 05] We don't have time to go into that one, but I trust through and sharing some of these foundations of truth from God's word for marriage that we start bringing some of these thoughts into our daily situations so that the conclusions we come to will certainly accomplish what the originator of marriage desired us to accomplish was his glory and our good and our joy in knowing him.

Well, I trust that, again, if you want the information you can let us know. I can get it to you. But let's encourage one another. We know that as couples we all face these challenges.

We all look good on Sunday morning and look like we're all in harmony. But we know we have difficulties and conflict and we need to encourage one another with these truths. So thank you for your time and listening.

We are dismissed.