

Place: Lurgan Baptist 17:3:2009

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

1. GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR MARRIAGE

Reading: Genesis 2:18-25

Many years ago Thomas Howard Payne the United States consul to Tunis was visiting Paris. As he saw the crowds thronging the streets at Christmas his thoughts turned to his family and loved ones back home. In his cold hotel room, he penned the thoughts of his heart,

**Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam
Be it ever so humble there's no place like home**

Charles Spurgeon said, “ *The word sounds like poetry to me. It does not matter if it is a cottage or a mansion home is home and there is no place it on earth.* ” Significantly these quotations are from over a century ago. Today the home has fallen on hard times. “ ***Phase out the family,*** ” is the cry of many today. The sign that hung in the Hollywood jewelry store said it all. It read “ ***We rent wedding rings.*** ” This temporary commitment to marriage is now being embraced by Christians. By Christians ? Yes. I mean we have the presence and power of the living Lord available to us, the prayer support of others in the family of God, the inner working of the Holy Spirit, the divinely inspired handbook of instruction on marriage. Not to mention the conferences, seminars, books, CD's

DVD's, yet in spite of all these resources Christian husbands and wives are walking away. Willfully, openly, unashamedly, without the slightest fear of God. *What do we need to do ?* We need to blow the dust off God's original marriage and blueprint for the home. Our great need is to hear what God has to say to His people about His design. *After all marriage is God's invention.* Now undoubtedly we are witnessing in our day an all out attack on marriage. The great English war hero Field Marshall Montgomery once said to his young troops, “ *Gentlemen don't think even think about marriage until you have mastered the art of warfare.* ” You may be thinking, “ *I can relate to that.* ” I mean why is marriage such a potential warfare ? Having a significant lasting relationship with someone, a union that gets better, sweeter, richer, and more fulfilling is becoming increasingly rare. Why ? Because of,

1. THE UNIVERSAL CURSE:

In the early chapters of the book of Genesis we find the origin of marital problems. Look at (2:18) Then in (2:19) we see the creation of the animal world and the naming of all the animals by Adam. Then in (2:21-22) God provides a helper for Adam. *Now have you noticed that from the very beginning God designed someone to be in charge and someone to help, someone to be in authority and someone to submit to that authority, someone to the provider and someone for whom to provide.* From the very beginning the man had the place of headship and the woman was the one for whom that headship was provided. Adam was the leader and Eve was to follow.

There was no animosity, no struggle, no conflict, only a glorious union. But then something very significant occurred. Look at (3:1) Do you see what the serpent is doing ? The serpent is bypassing the headship of the man and going to the one who was by nature the follower. Eve took the fruit and ate it and gave it to her husband and he took it and ate it. Here we see the reversal of their roles. The woman usurped the leadership of the man and the man became the follower. You see, God's design for marriage was twisted at the moment of temptation and this legacy has been the defilement of marriage relationships. Because there has been the reversal of the roles since that act marriage faces a great difficulty. In fact in the curse of (Gen Ch 3) the most basic aspects of human life are involved.

- **Child-bearing:** (3:16) the wonderful joy of having a child would be somewhat overshadowed by the anguish of childbirth.
- **Strife in Marriage:** (3:16) because the man is going to rule over the woman in an oppressive way and the woman will seek to rule over the man.
- **Strenuous Work:** (3:17-19) man will have to labour and provide for his family.
- **Death:** For God said, “ *in the day that thou eatest therefore thou shalt surely die.* ” (2:17)

Now look at human society today and what have you got ? Pain in child-bearing, difficulty in earning a living, and what's the cause of conflict in marriages ? The reversal of roles that came about in Adam and Eve's sin at the

beginning. So marriage today is operating under the universal curse.

2. THE DIABOLICAL CORRUPTION:

It's bad enough that marriage operates under the divine curse, but the attack does not end there. Satan takes his shots at marriage also. His aim is too destroy and devastate the world by destroying relationships at there most important level, the home. So what does the book of Genesis record ? It records Satan trying to corrupt God's design for marriage and family life, how ?

- By Polygamy: (4:19, 4:23)
- By Adultery: (16:1)
- By Homosexuality: (19:4-11)
- By Fornication & Rape: (34:1-2)
- By Incest: (38:13-18)
- By Prostitution: (38:24)
- By Evil Seduction: (39:7-12)

So fallen human nature, and the curse on the physical world and the attack of the hosts of hell, all have their guns shooting at marriage and the home. Do you see why marriage is tough ? Why there are so many divorces ? Why so many struggle ? Why so many are unhappy ?

3. THE GENERAL CONFUSION:

As if the elements of the curse and the corruption of Satan are not enough, add to them a society which says evil is good and good is evil. Television, films, magazines,

books and music all mock the design of God, making it difficult to live a godly life in the home. A prominent author declares, “ *the family is near the point of extinction.*” A sociologist says, “ *the family is dead. The first few years of child raising will be its only function.*” Society encourages us to live it up, and be unfaithful. My there is an all our attack on marriage. There is the (1) (2) (3), but thank God, there is,

(4) THE BIBLICAL COUNSEL:

You see, we could approach this subject from different angles. There is,

The Approach of Rationalism: this says our mind and opinions are to be the final bar of judgment.

The Approach of Traditionalism: this is how we reared our children in the past, this is how we must do it now.

The Approach of Pragmatism: which says whatever works is good and whatever is good is right. Our approach is,

The Approach of Scripturalism: what God has spoken in His Word.

The Book of Ephesians is crucially important if we are to understand how marriage works. Here we are confronted with two things.

1. Our STANDING:

You see, before we know the divine pattern that can make our married life and family life we must meet one requirement, we must be Christians. In the first 3 chapters

in the Book of Ephesians Paul makes it clear that he is writing to people who are “ *in Christ.*” (1:1 1:4 2:13) Now I am not saying that non Christians cannot have meaningful relationships. They can, but only up to a point. *I mean how can a husband obey the injunction to love his wife even as Christ loved the church, when he knows nothing of that love ?* How can a wife obey the command to submit herself unto her husband, when she does not know the Lord ? You see, apart from Jesus Christ we cannot expect our married and family life to be fulfilled because God is the One who invented marriage and wrote the book on how it is to work. (1)

2. Our STATE:

There are many believers who know the Lord, but who are not obeying His commands ? Why ? Because they are not filled with the Spirit (5:18) Do you know the result ? Family and marital problems. But where you get a family controlled by the Spirit of God, the result will be harmony as the wife submits, the husband loves, and the children obey. I hear believers praying that the pastor will be filled with the Spirit of God, that's good. *Do you ever hear any Christians praying that husbands and wives will be filled with the Spirit of God ?* I don't, yet Paul places this command to be filled within the context of husbands and wives, and children and parents. You see, the filling of the Spirit of God is the key to a successful marriage. Now having given you that as background to our subject I want us to look at God's blueprint for marriage.

(1) THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF MARRIAGE

Here are three simple questions for us to ask.

(a) WHEN WAS IT INSTITUTED ?

Look if you will at (2:8, 18) Marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden, and both the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul appealed to Eden as the basic pattern for all time. As far as I know there is only one statement about marriage that God includes four times in the Bible. He makes in (Gen 2:24, Matt 19:5 Mk 10:7-8 & Eph 5:31) The statement is this, “ *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.*” God makes this statement about marriage four times. He makes it once in the Old Testament and three times in the New Testament. He makes it once before man fell into sin and three times after man fell into sin. The statement contains God’s all time blueprint for a good marriage. (a)

(b) WHO INSTITUTED IT ?

God. (2:18) This is not the invention of man. Don’t you think that somewhere in a cave around a flickering fire one night that a group of people decided that marriage might be a good idea. No, God tells us that He Himself established, instituted, and ordained marriage at the beginning of human history. Marriage is not simply a civil institution, for it was founded before the existence of civil society. Moreover, it’s not simply a Christian institution, but rather “ *a creation ordinance.*” Who instituted it ? God, therefore men have no right to set it aside. The Lord

Jesus said, “ *What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*” (Matt 19:6) (a) (b)

(c) FOR WHO WAS IT INSTITUTED ?

For all mankind. (Gen 2:18) It’s not merely for Jews or Christians. As I have said marriage is a creation ordinance, it was instituted for man as man, not for man as a Jew or a Christian, albeit it is the believer who will find his relationship more meaningful if he guides his marriage by the divine manual. *You see, marriage is for all as the normal state.* The normal state is marriage not celibacy as Rome would seek to teach us. A man and his wife were put into the garden, not single person. My celibacy is exceptional and it takes a particular gift. (Matt 19:11-12, 1 Cor 7:7) The Lord says, “ *it is not good that the man should be alone,*” and one look at many bachelor’s pads would indicate that, “ *I will make an help meet for him.*” Marriage is a divine institution, it is from God and therefore it is good. The way some disparage marriage one would think it was introduced by Satan himself. By others it is represented as sinful, inferior, or the lesser of two evils, because of the sexual relationship between husband and wife.

My marriage was ordained by God and within the bond of marriage sexual relations are holy, right, and good. (1 Cor 7:5 Heb 13:4) Do you see what God is doing in marriage ? He is providing for our emotional needs, our intellectual needs, our social needs, our spiritual needs and our physical needs. (1)

(2) THE DECISIVE PARTING AT MARRIAGE

Look if you will at (2:24) Now misunderstand these words. Its not the husband only that has to make the decisive break at marriage, rather the husband as the divinely appointed head of the home is required to set an example to his wife, to give guidance to her, in both aspects of leaving and cleaving. Now as I have said here is God's blueprint for marriage and it has 4 aspects to it.

- There must be **Severance**: “ *leave*,”
- There must be **Permanence**: “ *cleave*,”
- There must be **Unity**: “ *one flesh*,”
- There must be **Intimacy**: “ *naked*,”

(a) Look at this Blueprint Negatively:

What the leaving is not.

1. It is not a Total Rejection of your Parents:

This leaving does not mean that when you get married you abandon and forsake your parents. That would be to fly in the face of such commands as “ *Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*” (Ex 20:12 Lk 2:51) At marriage the time for a young man to obey his parents has ceased, a new home has been established which creates a new seat of authority. However, the time for that young man to honour his parents never ceases, for whether married or unmarried we should always be concerned about them. 1.

2. It is not a Temporary Absence from your Parents:

So frequent is the circumstance of the young bride going home after the wedding and honeymoon it has become the subject of numerous jokes. (a) But

(b) Look at this Blueprint Positively:

What the leaving is. It involves at least two things.

1. Relationship to your Parents must be Changed:

There must be a **Severance**. The cord must be cut with the parents. For a man can no longer sustain the relationship with his parents that once he did. He now must become the head of a new decision making body that we call the family. You see, while the husband and wife relationship is permanent, the parent child relationship is not. Someone has said that “ *at marriage something is broke up which is temporary in favour of joining together something which is permanent.*” So your relationship to your parents must be changed. Now what does that mean practically ? Does it mean that you establish an adult relationship with them ? Does it mean that you must be more concerned about your spouse's ideas, opinions, practices than those of your parents ? Does it mean that you must not be dependant on your parents for affection, approval, assistance and counsel ? Does it mean you must stop trying to change your partner simply because your parents do not like him the way he is ?

“ Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother.”
Have you obeyed this divine requirement in marriage ?
Have you left your father and mother ? Since you took
those solemn vows has your relationship to your parents
been changed ? 1.

2. Relationship with your Partner must be Preeminent:

Look at this key verse again. (2:24) Not only severance
but **permanence**. Leave and cleave. Sever and bond.
Loosen and secure. Depart from and attach to. Charles
Swindoll tells us that the Hebrew term translated
“ cleave,” means *“ to glue, to cling.”* Moses writes of
diseases *“ clinging,”* to the body. Job mentions bones
“ clinging,” to the skin. Both use this same original word.
Do you know what today’s problem is ? Couples enter the
marriage relationship believing it is terminable. *“ Till
death us do part,”* is just a form of words. For more and
more it is being interpreted *“ Till disagreement us do
part,”* or *“ till other interests us do part.”* But this would
never meant to be so in God’s original match. During our
country’s darkest days in second world war it was a pudgy
cigar smoking, unimpressive looking man who held our
country together. While other voices were shouting
“ surrender,” Sir Winston Churchill stood fast. Bombs
devastated city blocks, buildings crumbled, bridges fell
but the stubborn Prime Minister refused to budge.

Never once did he consider capitulating or even
negotiating with the Nazis. He operated on a simple rule

of thumb when it came to winning a war. On numerous
occasions Churchill stated his philosophy in six words.
“ Wars are not won by evacuations.” Surrendering is not
an option if you plan to win a war or succeed in a
marriage. You see, the leaving is with a view to the
cleaving. This means that the husband wife relationship
and not the parent child relationship is your priority
human relationship. You see, the parent child relationship
is never described in terms of leaving and cleaving, or of
being one flesh. My children do not need indulgent
parents who continually neglect each other. They need
parents who show them how to face and solve their
problems. Parents who will show them how to be good
husbands and wives, and how to relate to other people.
Do you know what all this means practically ? Wayne
Mack puts it like this.

***If you are parents your goal should be to prepare your
children to leave and not to stay.***

***When your children marry, you must not try to run their
lives.***

How many marriages have been wrecked by interfering
parents ? Parents who have failed to see God’s plain
directive. (1) (2)

(3) THE DIFFERENT REASONS FOR MARRIAGE

And the first one is brought before us in our key passage.

(a) THE PROBLEM OF LONELINESS:

Look if you will at (2:18) Now this event occurred on the 6th day of the creative week. God performed miracle after miracle day after day, and on four distinct occasions God passed His approval on His creation. (1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:31) But what do you notice about God's statement concerning Adam ? For contrary to these other statements here we read, “ *it is not good.*” This is the first time in all the Bible that God says something is not good. *Now what is not good ?* God says its not good for man to be alone. Now this not just a passing comment. In the original Hebrew the negative is most emphatic therefore it appears first in the phrase. Literally it says, “ *Not good is man's aloneness.*” God the Creator saw man his creature in an isolated, alone condition and he declared that Adam's solitary state was not good. You see, God cared about Adam's aloneness. Adam's wife was in the mind of God long before she was in the arms of Adam. So one of the reasons for marriage was to solve the problem of loneliness. ***Companionship therefore is the essence of marriage.***

God provided Eve not only as Adam's helper, not only as the one who would complement and complete him but as his companion. You see, in the Bible marriage is described in terms of companionship. (Prov 2:17) The word “ *guide,*” here is “ *companion,*” it conveys the idea of “ *one that has a close intimate relationship to another.*” Here is the husband providing companionship for his wife. Malachi talks about “ the wife of thy youth,” (Mal 2:14) there the wife is providing companionship for her husband. Now if you put the two ideas together you get the meaning of companionship. A companion is one

with whom you are intimately united in thoughts, goals, plans, efforts and in the case of marriage bodies. Companionship is therefore the essence of marriage. The husband is called to provide companionship for his wife, the wife is called to provide companionship for her husband. You see, you can feel lonely in a marriage and when the wife attempts to fight loneliness by substituting children for her husband and when the husband fights loneliness by burying himself in work, that marriage is in trouble. For companionship is the very essence of marriage. Now tell me, husbands are you providing companionship for your life ? Likewise what about you ?

(b) THE PROCREATION OF CHILDREN:

What was God's mandate to Adam and Eve ? Well, look at (1:27-28) God blesses them. How did God bless them ? Will look at the words with which God blessed them, “ *Be fruitful and multiply.*” God simply meant, “ *I give you my blessing to bear children, to fill the earth and subdue it.*” So child bearing is another reason for marriage. Then there is,

(c) THE PASSIONS OF THE BODY:

Do you recall the words of your marriage ceremony ? “ *Marriage is ordained for the hallowing of the union between man and woman, so that the natural instincts and affections being directed aright they should live in purity and honour.*” God says “ *I will help meet for him,*” and the wife helps as her husbands biological counterpart, she is the one who answers to his physical needs. Now let me

state that there is nothing wrong with sex in and of itself. I mean God pronounced all His creation to be “ *very good*,” and this gift is a lovely expression of the mutual love between husband and wife. You see, this gift is to be reserved for the permanent, trusting, secure relationship of marriage. (1 Cor 6:11-7:5) Young folk, the Lord forbids sex before marriage. The Bible says, “ *Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord.*” (1 Cor 6:13) Older folk, the Lord forbids sex outside of marriage. The Bible says, “ *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” (Ex 20:13) People today speak of safe sex. The only safe sex is within the confines of the marriage bond. My don’t you fall victim to the myth that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. A cartoon on one occasion showed a rooster strutting around with all of his chickens. On the other side of the fence were some more chickens. Some boys were also playing football on the other side of the fence and accidentally threw the ball into the chicken yard.

The rooster looked at the football, looked at his hens, looked at the chickens on the other side of the fence, and said, “ *I don’t mean to gripe girls, but I wish you would look at the size of the eggs they are putting out on that side.*” The grass always seems to be greener on the other side of the fence. But lets cultivate the grass in our own back yard. Did you notice the final reason for marriage ?

(d) THE PROMOTION OF UNITY:

“ *And they shall be one flesh,*” (2:24) What does that mean ? A total commitment to intimacy in all of life

together, symbolized by the physical union of husband and wife. One plus one may not be accurate mathematically, but its an accurate description of God’s intention for marriage. For God’s purpose is total unity. (1 Cor 6:16) Now tell me, is your relationship with your husband/wife a healthy one ? Are you becoming more and more one in mind, in outlook, in goals ? Look finally at,

(4) THE DEFINITE COMMITMENT IN MARRIAGE

You see, God’s kind of marriage involves a total and irrevocable commitment of two people to each other. For,

(a) Marriage is an Enduring Relationship:

In the words of the marriage ceremony its “ *until death us do part.*” Do you recall the words of Christ ? “ *Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*”

(Matt 19:6) We live in a day when many think well, if marriage does not work, we can get a divorce. People make vows to be faithful unto death, but underneath their breath they say, “ *unless are problems are too great.*” God says, “ *No, that’s not the way I planned it I want husband and wife to cleave to one another.*” (Mk 10:9) Society today stresses the parent child relationship to be the most significant one. But that’s not what the Bible teaches. The parent child relationship is temporary, the husband wife relationship is permanent. God didn’t put a parent and a child into the garden, God put a husband and

wife. Do you know what will happen if you make the parent child relationship the most important ? One day after they marry, you'll awaken to the fact, that you are two strangers living together with little or nothing between you. I mean what kind of life would you have right now if your children were suddenly taken from you ? What are you really building between yourselves ? (a)

(b) Marriage is an Exclusive Relationship:

“ *Keep thee only unto her.* ” God's ideal is one man and one woman for life. Its interesting that the Bible describes marriage as a covenant.

1. Marriage is a Covenant:

In the Book of Proverbs the wife who leaves her husband whom she married in her youth is accused by God of forgetting the covenant of her God. (2:17) Do you know what Malachi says ? (2:14) Do you know something ? A good marriage is based more on commitment than feeling or animal attraction. Marriage is an irrevocable covenant or contract to which we are bound. When two people get married they are committing themselves to each other and entering a solemn and binding agreement.

2. Marriage is a Covenant between Two People:

Did you know that marriage is restricted to one man and one woman ? Homosexual marriage is forbidden explicitly (Lev 18:22 Rom 1:27) and polygamy is

forbidden implicitly. God created one wife for Adam not two and God said, that two not three “ *shall be one flesh.* ”

3. Marriage is a Covenant between two people who Promise to be Faithful to Each other Regardless of what Happens:

What did you say the day of your wedding ? “ *For richer, for poorer, for better for worse.* ” Did you say that ? That means that the wife will be faithful even if the husband is afflicted with bulges, baldness, bunions and bifocals, even if he loses his health, wealth, his job, his charm, even if someone more exciting comes all. This means that the husband will be faithful even if the wife loses her beauty, even if she is not as neat and tidy and submissive, as you would like her to be. Even if she spends money foolishly and is a terrible cook. Even if her hair grows grey. One wife turned to her husband and said, “ *Will you still love me when my hair turns grey ?* ” “ *Why not,* ” he said. “ *Have I not loved you through five other shades.* ” You see, marriage means that a husband and wife enter into a relationship in which they commit themselves to each other regardless of what happens. Someone put it like this. **Marriage is total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with another person until death.**

Husbands, wives don't take your marriage for granted, take it with gratitude. Don't take each other for granted. Be kind, submissive, thoughtful. Don't forget the common courtesies of life. Be loving to each other and in so doing reflect the relationship between Christ and His church, and bring glory to the God who instituted marriage.

