

God Made The Family

Genesis 1:26-2:25

Key Verse: 2:24

“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

This morning we are privileged to begin a four-part study in God’s word about the family. The family is the foundational unit of any society, and in particular the church. Where the family is healthy, the society is healthy. Where the family is unhealthy, there is disaster. Today, the definition of family is greatly questioned. Stories of troubled families abound, and even in literature we cannot find the picture of a perfect family. Many fairy tales end with, “They lived happily ever after,” and cannot describe what “ever after” is. Yet in this passage, God himself reveals to us the meaning and definition of family. This is God’s immeasurable grace to us. Understanding this family, how God put it together and its purpose, reveals God’s plan for all families. The family can be summarized as a man and woman, each in God’s perfect image, living under God’s abundant blessing and for his purpose until they become one. After sin entered the world, family life became cursed, as did all creation. But in Jesus, the curse is lifted and we can grow in God’s original purpose for us and for our families. Let’s listen to God’s beautiful plan for the family and pray to grow ours and many families in God’s original blessing and purpose in our Lord Jesus Christ. And pray for those who are considering marriage, may establish families with God’s purpose and blessing.

1. God established the family

Genesis chapter 1 proclaims, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It was a perfect world, full of God’s wisdom, power, beauty, love, creativity and life. It displayed the glory of God. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” Then, at the end of the sixth day, God made his crowning achievement—mankind. Verse 26 reveals God’s purpose in creating mankind. Let’s read this verse together. “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so they may rule over the fish in the seas and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’” God decided to make mankind in his image to rule over everything he had created. And this is what God did. Look at verse 27. “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Before thinking about marriage itself, it is critical to realize who participated in God’s original family. Genesis 1:26 & 27 state that they were a man and woman created in God’s image. The foundation of God’s blessed marriage is individuals growing in God’s image. So, what is God’s image? Last week I visited New York and saw the Statue of Liberty. I cannot take you there, but I can show you the image, the picture, so you can see what it looks like. Likewise, God created man and woman in his image, so that all creation could see who God is through them. When creation looks at us, God wants the world to see the reflection of God. Of course mankind cannot be as powerful as God, nor

omniscient or omnipresent as God is. What God gave mankind was His character. The original man and woman perfectly reflected God's character.

Since mankind fell into sin, God's perfect character has been greatly disfigured in us. But God revealed his character perfectly in Jesus Christ, God's one and only Son. God's image is also exactly the fruit of Spirit, as described in Galatians 5:22-23--love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. God's image is courage, wisdom and holiness. God's image is also relational. It is revealed in how Jesus related to God, to people and God's creation. And it is responsibility. The family God created begins with beings growing in God's image. It is not optional. I know one young man who wanted to marry, yet had no idea he had to support his family. He had no idea that he should love and support his wife. He burdened his wife with all responsibilities, including managing finances. When he told this to his pastor, the pastor was in shock for days. It was me. But God helped me grow in his image by being responsible to support my family for the last 26 years. And after 26 years I repented of burdening my wife with managing the household by herself, and decided to help. She was shocked and thankful and said, "Now you understand what I have born all these years!" Praise God who helped me grow in one way. I know a young man, Augustine Park, who looks unassuming and quiet. But he has been growing in God's image. He cares for his wife, who is a medical student, and loves others, caring for a fellowship and now the Well Ministry. He and his wife look happy, and their family is a blessing. Please remember that the first step of any happy family is that both husband and wife continue to grow in God's image, through our Lord Jesus Christ. When do we stop growing in God's image? Never. I especially pray for all American young men to grow in God's image as responsible, loving and holy men. Then we can raise many blessed families and godly women can be happy.

Look at verse 27 again, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." Next we see that the beings God put in the first marriage were male and female. God called them mankind, but they were two distinct beings—male and female. These days, people have many questions about gender and who can marry. Some want to switch gender or be gender neutral. But God was very clear--God made the family between male and female. There is no ambiguity.

There is also a question as to whether one is more important than another. That is nonsense. In God's original family, it was also clear that both the man and the woman were created in God's image. Anyone created in God's image is infinitely valuable, because God's image is priceless. Adam knew he was made in God's image, as was his wife. Because of God's image in her, his wife was infinitely valuable. And Eve believed she was created in God's image, as was Adam, and he was infinitely valuable. Because of sin, we cannot respect the image of God in ourselves, let alone others. Then problems arise, because we can look down on others. But when we receive Jesus, he opens our eyes to God's image in us. And we can see God's image in others, especially our spouses. Then we can respect them and love them as beings of infinite worth. We need

to ask God to open our eyes to see our worth because of his image, and then see the infinite value of others in God's image as well.

In Genesis chapter two, God gives us a detailed account of how he put the family together. Genesis 2:7 says, "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." The Lord formed the man from dust like a sculpture and gave him life by breathing his Spirit into the man. Then the man became a living being. The Lord took the man and placed him in a garden he had made. It was a beautiful garden—actually its beauty was beyond description. It was beautiful to look at and even smelled wonderful with aromatic resin. The temperature was always just right and the grass was like the softest carpet. Sleeping was like sleeping on a cloud.

Then the Lord gave a command. Look at Genesis 2:16-17. "And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'" The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was one of the two special trees in the garden—the other was the tree of life. God commanded the man first to be free. Perhaps the man was unsure what he could do—I mean it wasn't his garden. But God said he was free to enjoy everything. The only restriction was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree was a restriction to establish God's authority. The key to a relationship with God is acknowledging and respecting that God is the owner and he is the absolute ruler. Paradoxically, in submitting to God there is true freedom and blessing. In him is eternal happiness and peace. The key to maintaining this relationship is holding even one word of God. If Adam held this command, he and all mankind would be in paradise forever. Unfortunately, as we know and as we experience every day, Adam did not hold God's word and brought curse upon the world. The logic is very simple—to establish the family God created, we must grow in God's image, and we grow in God's image by holding his word. In Genesis chapter 6, mankind completely loses any thought to please God. The world became a living hell, and even God could not bear it. Today many want to live in families without God. They want to enjoy life without God. The end is only disaster. Let's pray for ours and all families to live before God by holding his word.

At this point God's work would seem complete. Adam had God's word and was in paradise. He had a deep relationship with God. But God saw Adam was not complete. We learned in chapter one that from the beginning God planned to make them male and female. The Lord wasn't finished. Look at verse 18. "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" It is interesting that God, who is perfect, made man to need a helper. God could have made man so that he didn't need a helper. But God deliberately made man to need a helper. God did so in order for man not to become proud, but realize he needs help through relationships. To God relationships are most important. Men can be great, but we can agree, most of us need help, and most of us need a lot of it. God made the woman so that together, they would become one complete, wonderful being. The helper suitable for man would fill in all the gaps of the man's inadequacies, and vice-versa. In history there have been a few people

God created who can survive emotionally and perform God's work without marriage, such as St. Paul and Mother Barry. But in general, those cases are rare. God made each of us in his image, but incomplete. We need a helper. We need a helper emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically. God made the man and the woman like two parts of a puzzle that fit together just right, and together they make a beautiful complete picture.

In 19 & 20 we learn about the first courtship, the first date and the first wedding ceremony. It is the first romance novel. God first brought all the wild animals to the man for the Adam to name them. Adam came to know all the animals, but there was no suitable helper among them. God knew this all along. Then God placed the man into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and from that rib created a woman. When the man awoke, there was the woman. He wondered if he was still dreaming. She was beautiful, spiritual, and intelligent; she spoke the same language and worshiped God like him. She too was made in the image of God. And was quite literally part of him. Look at verse 22. "Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man." This was God's final act of creation. Isn't it interesting? God completed all his creation by making the woman. It is absolutely not complete without her.

Then God brought her to the man. God himself introduced Adam to Eve. This reveals that God himself puts together families in him. The man couldn't believe it. He was overjoyed and 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." It is God himself who brings two people, a man and a woman, together to become one in marriage, and become a complete being in him. I want to tell you about my father and mother. My dad needed help supporting our family when we were young, so my mother worked nights as a nurse, as well as helping to raise five children. My dad was tough and my mom was gentle. Later, my mom met Jesus and prayed for my dad, and he too received Jesus after some time. Then, in the last few years my mom became ill and couldn't feed herself. So my dad fed her twice a day every day. A short time ago my mom went to heaven. Isn't it a beautiful story of two becoming one in God? By the way, they met on a blind date, but clearly God brought them together. Marriage is not an accident. Marriages are established by God and God's purpose is to make a complete being in him. Let's ask God for his view of our marriages and all marriages.

2. God made the family for his purpose.

So far we thought about how God put the family together. Now, how were they to live the rest of their lives? Were they to go their separate ways doing their own thing, saying, "See you at Christmas!" Of course not! Look at Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." God gave the family a mission to serve together. This mission was to work the garden he had created and to make it fruitful. Genesis 1:28 describes it also. It says, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" God's purpose for the family was to be fruitful together. God is

always growing and bearing fruit. God commands the same from his creation. God even told the fish to be fruitful. How much more must mankind be fruitful! In 2:10-14 we learn that God had a stream flowing from the Garden that divided into four rivers that went throughout the earth. It was the symbol that God wanted to spread his blessing to the ends of the earth. At that time, the beauty of the garden did not cover the earth. It was a relatively small garden, maybe like the Chicago Botanic Garden. But God wanted to spread this beauty until it covered the earth. This was the mission of the family. They were called to cultivate the world until God's glory was revealed in every inch of the earth.

God created the family to work hard bringing his blessing and glory to the world. A family is not created for its own personal enjoyment. This will lead to disaster also. Rather, when a husband and wife unite in serving God's purpose, God makes them one, and together they can bring his blessing bearing much fruit. You may not know, but my wife and I are very different. She is beautiful and brilliant—she has a PhD in biochemistry. She came from the tough West Side of Chicago from Greek and German ancestors. I am from Wisconsin, where we never lock the doors, so I am a bit of a hick. She is sometimes stressed because of a tough upbringing, and I am usually relaxed, or oblivious. When we married Greek traditions were so strange to me. I love music and am day dreamy, while she is analytical. It seems we have nothing in common. But we both believe is God put us together and together we serve God's purpose for our family. Everything else is secondary. So at home we talk about God's work and raising our children. She has helped me live in Chicago and I have hopefully been a gentle influence to give her rest. Together we are one in serving God's purpose in Christ. We have been married 26 years. God willing we have another 30 or 40 together, growing in Christ's image, growing in love and serving God's purpose. Serving God's purpose is not easy. It is hard. Sometimes I complained or sometimes she complained. But we strengthened one another to look to God. Especially Helen is prayerful and finds strength in God's word. I am so blessed because God led me to the perfect godly woman for me, and together we grow in love and in serving Christ. This is God's unfathomable grace to me.

The work God blessed the family to do was to take of his world. The man and woman were to be stewards and shepherds of God's world. We are to take care of it with great joy, creativity and thought. When we are serving God's purpose, life is never boring, but always exciting and new. There are new adventures and new discoveries in God's infinite universe. So we are to lovingly serve and bless this world. Especially today, America needs the loving care of many godly families. We need examples of blessed families. May God hear our prayer to raise many, many beautiful godly families serving God's purpose.

In order to fulfill God's purpose, however, we need God's authority. 1:28b says, "Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." In this verse God gave the man and the woman his authority to rule over all creation. Without this authority, the family is powerless. But God himself gives mankind this authority when they are under his authority. Human beings are clumps of dust of the earth. By our own power we can do very little. We certainly cannot rule the earth. But when God gives us his authority we can do his work with great power. Jesus

gives us his authority through his word and Spirit. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18 & 19a, “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations....’” God gives families in him authority to spread the gospel. With this authority, we can spread God’s blessing to the world.

3. God made them one

This brings us to our key verse, 2:24. Let’s read this verse together. “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Here we see the ultimate destination of the family—the two become one. According to this verse, the key to a united family is a man leaving his father and mother, and becoming united to his wife. A man must be strong and be able to unite with his wife. When a man leaves his father and mother, he unites with his wife to make a new entity, a new family. This is a completely new being. It is the birth of a new life. God said this is one flesh. Jesus said the same in Mark 10:7-9, “‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” God’s purpose is to reveal how he can make two one. Only God Almighty can make two one. In God, a family must be inseparable. We know how difficult it is to split an atom to make an atomic bomb. But when two become one in God, splitting of the family must be much more difficult than splitting an atom. A man and woman in marriage are to become one being, one unit, one family. We must have this view of the family. God can work through such a family, because it reveals his glory. Sometimes people worry about hierarchy in the family. It is a product of our sinful, cursed world. In God’s original family, there was no hierarchy. There was only oneness in him. There was only love and joy and peace and blessing. We need to ask God to restore this oneness to our families and all families, so that God may be revealed through them.

Let’s read verse 25 together. “Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.” In this verse, we learned the love, joy and freedom Adam and Eve shared. It was the perfect family. They had no shame. The relationship was open and free. This is God’s view of marriage. As I said 26 years ago Helen and I were married. It has been a beautiful 26 years, with some struggles and many beautiful times. But we pray to grow in God’s image, God’s purpose and oneness. As we have lived together, I found our marriage has become sweeter year by year. I love Helen more every year. And I believe it will become sweeter until we go to God’s house. May God bless our families to taste God’s wonderful sweetness every day and spread this blessing to the world.

From this passage we learn that God created the family to become one in him and in this way reveal his glory. A godly family is made of a man and a woman growing in God’s image, who are put together by God and serving God’s purpose for them. In seeking God and growing in God this way, God makes them one, and reveals his glory, because only God can make two one. May God bless all of our families to become one in him, and may God establish many godly families through our prayers and labor. May God bless America through the raising of many Godly families.