

MARRIAGE & FAMILY
BIBLICAL GUIDANCE
WITH PASTOR
DAVID BROWN

Grace and Peace to you.

God is overflowing with grace and peace, and He is the source of fresh starts and new beginnings. I hope this study will help you begin comprehension and experiencing all that God desires for you and your family.

This teaching series is titled “Family Matters”. Confusion and curiosity surround today’s generation of families. There is lots of conversation but little clarity on the subjects of marriage, parenting and the family relating to our brave new world. This booklet hopes to present a picture for marriage and family to not only survive but thrive with meaningful, God-honoring relationships.

The following is a list of titles and topics we will cover. You may notice that some of the chapters in this booklet are actually book titles, with a selected Scripture passage. This was intentional to point you to a resource on that subject. Each session will adapt content from that given book with relevant examination and application from Scripture. Further, this booklet is an accumulation of personal study, insight and collection of various resources. In fact, two essential resources part of the backdrop for this booklet are:

God, Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation by Andreas Köstenberger

Marriage, Family, Sex and The Gospel. Secret Church Study Guide by David Platt and Disciple-Making International (www.disciplemakingintl.org)

Each session should review and discuss the material with 3 basic questions:

- 1) What insights are you learning and what is God teaching you?*
- 2) What areas of belief & behavior are being challenged in your life?*
- 3) What questions or struggles do you have?*

Above all, thank you for your interest and investment in your family. My hope and prayer is that your time studying and engaging this material in discussion will reap a productive harvest for you and your family.

***Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Psalm 127:1a***

FAMILY MATTERS

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FAMILY MATTERS: A BEAUTIFUL DREAM FAMILY Genesis 1 – 4

What does a dream family look like? Write your thoughts or maybe even draw a picture.

Life is a beautiful dream reality.

Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning, God...And God saw that it was good/beautiful.”

John 1:12 “But to all who did receive Him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

- God made galaxies... (Colossians 1:16-17)
- God gives grace... (Colossians 1:18-20)

Life and marriage is a good gift from a great God. Since the beginning God has designed the world with the great dream reality of His existence and with His purpose. God created you to be in relationship with Himself through the gospel of Jesus Christ. To miss this reality is to miss out on all that life is meant to be.

God is the Architect of life

Genesis 2:15 “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

- G o d ’ s O w n e r s h i p = M y S t e w a r d s h i p
(Psalm 24:1; Matthew 6:33)
- God’s blueprints for life are found in the promises and commands of Scripture (Psalm 1; Psalm 119; 2Timothy 3:16-17; 2Peter 1:3-11)

God gave family as a beautiful gift.

Genesis 2:18, 21-22 “The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him...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. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.”

- Human relationships are unique and essential (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)
- Marriage is a creation institution for humanity and not just a Christian right.
- Spouses are chosen by God (Genesis 24; Proverbs 18:22, 19:14)
- Children are a holy heritage (Psalm 127-128)

God's design for marriage is perfect oneness.

Genesis 2:23-24 *"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 a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.'"*

Hosea 2:16, 19a *"In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master'...I will betroth you to me forever."*

Isaiah 62:5b *"As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you."*

Genesis 2:24 is the essential verse defining marriage in the Bible. It is quoted 4 times: Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31) and is alluded to indirectly numerous other times. From this passage flows a working definition of marriage.

- Marriage is an earthly relationship pointing to an eternal reality (Matthew 22:20; Ephesians 5:31-32)
- What you say about and how you live out marriage & family represents your beliefs about God and His relationship with the church.

God's design for marriage is profoundly unique.

- Marriage is a foundational stewardship for creation (Genesis 1:27-28). It provides the safe environment for pro-creation and nurture of individuals in society. It is personal, relational and communal. Marriage is a foundational institution pointing to a greater reality of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:31-32).

- Marriage is heterosexual (Leviticus 18:22-23/20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; Jude 1:6-7). It is for "a man and his wife." The natural sense of relationships and pro-creation validate heterosexuality. Marriage is not reduced merely to sexual intimacy.

More about this in study guide section "Marriage and Culture Wars". NOTE: Even if you have trouble believing this element of defining marriage, do not quit exploring the other truths of marriage as God intended.

- Marriage is exclusive. "A man will leave father and mother and be united to wife."
 - Marriage is exclusive in that of leaving parents. This is not so much location (geography) as it refers to loyalty in a new relationship.
 - Marriage is also exclusive in terms of monogamous (not polygamous/polyamorous) partners for life (Deuteronomy 17:17; Leviticus 18:18). God expects faithfulness in His worshipers, not adulterous idolaters.
- Marriage is covenantal and life-long (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 19:6; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16). Its union is "*bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh...shall hold fast... one flesh.*" The permanence of marriage provides the security and hopefulness of relationships. It is more than a human contract but a divine covenant. Likewise, God is faithful in His covenant.
- Marriage is complementarian. Man and woman are interdependent with equal value but

independent with different roles assigned in the family. The biblical ideas of “*headship*” and “*helper*” are significant here. Further, families are to reflect the love, sacrifice, service and submission that Jesus had unto the Lord God, thereby modeling the gospel unto the world.

Biblical Manhood

- has a work to labor (Genesis 2:15)
- has an responsibility to lead (Genesis 2:16, ff.; I Corinthians 11:3, 8; Ephesians 5:23)
- has a relationship to love (Genesis 2:23-24; Ephesians 5:25, 28; Colossians 3:19; I Peter 3:7)
- Biblical manhood affirms purpose and rejects passivity; affirms responsibility and rejects apathy; affirms connection and rejects isolation.

Biblical Womanhood

- has a calling to support [*helper*] (Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:24, 33; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:3-5)
- has a calling to shape (Genesis 3:15/4:1; Proverbs 31:10-31; I Timothy 2:15; I Peter 3:1-6)
- Biblical womanhood affirms a submissive spirit and rejects a controlling attitude; affirms a nurturing spirit and rejects a neglecting selfishness.

What is with the “S” word?

Inigo Montoya, *The Princess Bride*

“You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

Elisabeth Elliot

“Marriage is used in the OT to express the relationship between God and His covenant people and in the NT between Christ and the Church. Tremendous heavenly truths are set forth in a wife’s subjection to her husband and the use of this metaphor in the Bible cannot be accidental.”

Elizabeth George

“Our submission to our husband—whether or not he is a Christian, whether or not he is obeying God—preaches a lovelier and more powerful sermon that our mouth ever could.”

Carolyn Mahaney

“The edict for wives to submit originated in the gracious heart of God. This command is not punishment for our sin. Neither is it optional or devised by man. Rather it is *God* who determined that we are to voluntarily place ourselves under our husbands’ authority. He designed submission for His glory.”

The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) (Article XVIII)

“...The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.”

Submission does not mean

- Lesser value or worth (Genesis 1:27; Galatians 3:28).
- Husband, or men in general, is in place of God (1 Corinthians 11:3).
- Husband may demand or dominate wife into submission.
- Wife relinquishes independent thought or becomes silent partner.
- Wife cannot influence husband or succumbs to his every expectation (1 Cor 7:16; 1 Pet 3:1).
- Women submit to all men; only wives are commanded to submit to husband.

Submission does mean

- Trust: as Jesus trusted the Father's wise plan (Philippians 2:5-11) and as Sarah followed Abraham.
- Respect in heart and attitude (Ephesians 5:33).
- Typically not apparent when its present but often painfully obvious when its not present.

God's plan for oneness is disrupted by Satan (Genesis 3)

3:1, 4 Satan spreads doubt on God's Word

3:1 Satan slights God's marriage role assignment

3:8-19 Satan separates man from God

Effects of the Fall (Romans 5:18-19)

- Theological/Spiritual (3:8-9, 21, 23-24)
- Psychological (3:7, 10, 21)
- Ecological (3:14, 18)
- Biological (3:15-16)
- Sociological (3:12-13, 16-17)
- Physiological (3:19)
- Epistemological (3:22)

The Fall of Man

- Apathetic Leadership
Adam observes Eve's temptation and fall (Gen3:1-6 note the "we" of v.2 and he was "with her in v.6).
- Abused Leadership
Adam hides from Eve and then later blames her (3:8-12). Man will be tempted to rule over woman (3:16).

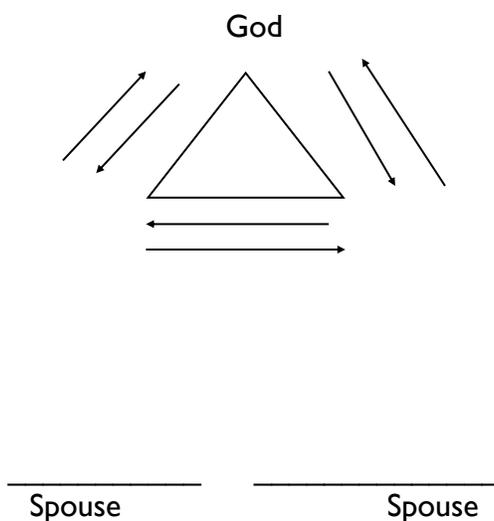
The Fall of Woman

- Dismissal of responsibility (Genesis 3:1, 13)
- Defiant of leadership (Genesis 3:6, 16)

The world we live in is not a perfect place, in fact it is a profoundly broken world. Genesis 3 describes "The Fall" of humanity and mankind has never been the same since. God's idea for marriage was perfect peace and harmony between himself and his people. However, the freedom of human choice separated the ability to sustain such peace. Adam & Eve rebelled against God just as much as your own heart does at given times.

Husbands & Wives stay humble and honor each other (Mark 10:45; Romans 12:10)! Gary Thomas in his book Sacred Marriage, writes “Husbands you are married to a fallen woman in a broken world. Wives, you are married to a sinful man in a sinful world. It is guaranteed that your spouse will sin against you, disappoint you, and have physical limitations that will frustrate you and sadden you. He may come home with the best intentions and still lose his temper. She may have all of the desire but none of the energy. This is a fallen world...You will never find a spouse who is not affected in some way by the reality of the Fall.”

So in other words, if you are entering or hoping marriage will make you happy then you have misplaced your hope. Marriage is not designed to make you happy but to give you an opportunity to grow in holiness—toward your greater relationship with God.



So, where are you? What direction is your life (not just your marriage) going? The direction of your marriage depends on the direction of your life. And the direction you are headed determines your destination. So, the ultimate question becomes: WHERE do you want to end up? Think in terms of 5, 10, 20 and even 50 years. The destination you seek is determined by the direction you are headed and the decisions you are making.

Proverbs 3:5-7 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.”

What stands in your way from trusting God’s path and as your Path-way?

FOR TROUBLED & REBUILDING MARRIAGES

BELIEVE that God can restore and rebuild your life and marriage. God is a God of hope and healing. In some sense, your marriage can actually become stronger than it originally was; like broken steel that is welded back together having a greater bond.

Genesis 50:20 “[What was] intended to harm me, God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Psalms 46:1 “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

Romans 8:28-29 “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God fore knew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son...”

TRUSTING God’s hope and plan, commit to honoring God and your spouse by repenting of known sin and obeying God’s commands. This must be a “whatever it takes” attitude! Even if one spouse is uncommitted to honoring God, God wants to do a work in your life.

So...

- **Changing yourself:** You cannot change other people or much more yourself. Repent of sin and trust Jesus’ grace to grow you where He wants you to go. Remember: crying, criticizing, demanding, and manipulating will only repel not attract. Further, in working to change yourself spiritually do not neglect your physical & emotional life.
- **Changing consequences:** You should not allow separation or worse, divorce, to be easy; especially if sin is involved. Bring the darkness into the light and hold persons accountable in the areas of relationships, finance and the current law systems.
- **Changing the future:** You do not know what will happen, only God does. Trust Him for your tomorrows.

TRUSTING God’s strength and Word, commit to the investment of spiritual growth and biblical counseling. The sessions in this booklet are meant to help you have a biblical understanding of life and family. As possible, communicate and discuss these with your spouse and biblical counselor.

> Have both spouses write a list of sins you bring into the marriage. Be as specific and detailed as possible. Be ready to share and begin confession of this list.

> Have both spouses write a list of lies the other spouse may believe about them. In a constructive mindset, use the lists to clarify communication and perspectives.

OTHER HELPS for rebuilding a troubled marriage.

- The Love Dare (Kendrick)
- Ask your pastor and church family for professional counseling recommendations.

FAMILY MATTERS: WHEN SINNERS SAY I DO Ephesians 1 - 6

Reality Check: Marriage is not a fairy tale or a romance novel! Marriage is the union of two sinners carrying the luggage of life. Sometimes the luggage gets opened on the honeymoon and other times it stays packed for months, even years before it gets opened. But the luggage is always there, sometimes tripping the owners with their stuffed content.

Spouses must not ignore their sin. It is when the couple, who were joined together for the sovereign purposes of God, come to the realization that the only thing that can sustain them is God's great grace through Jesus Christ. When marriages become gospel-centered they have a foundation that can build a home to withstand any storm and any sin (Matthew 7:24-27).

Marriage is for our good but it is first for God's glory (Ephesians 1:1-13).

"to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the Beloved" (1:6)

Have you ever buttoned your shirt and then later in the day realized something is wrong – you missed a button and the alignment is all wrong? Or when you get your tires changed, rotated & balanced the mechanic says "I need to fix your alignment. If I don't fix your alignment, you will continue to have tire problems."

Marriage is about alignment. Alignment towards God and His purposes in life. Dave Harvey says, "there's something more important at stake than a great wedding album [and generations of family pictures]... [sic] How easy it is to act as if husband and wife are the only relevant parties in a marriage... marriage is most amazing not because it brings people joy, or allows for a nurturing environment for children, or because it stabilizes society (even though it does all those things). Marriage is awesome because God designed it to display his glory...[sic] When a man and woman are joined in marriage, a new and lifelong model of the relationship between Christ and his church is launched."

Marriage is waking up with the worst of sinners (Ephesians 2:1-8; 1 Timothy 1:15)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (2:8)

"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." (1 Tim 1:15)

Before marriage each person places their best foot forward; they are on their best behavior, frequently showered and dressed nicely, uses manners and is flirty and doting on one another. But, after the first day, weeks and months of marriage you realize the person is a little different than you originally thought. One person has said, "a man enters marriage thinking she will never change and a woman enters marriage thinking she can change him." The reality is that both spouses are constantly changing and this must be understood from a God-ward perspective or the marriage will be short-lived.

You see, as we consider that everything is for God's glory, we must also recognize that you and I are glory thieves. We seek to satisfy ourselves rather than give of ourselves. We seek self-fulfillment rather than self-denial. As the apostle Paul said of himself, *"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." (1 Tim 1:15)*. Each morning we awake with the reminder that we live in a fallen world (aches, pains, odors, anxiety, etc.) and even more that we are a fallen sinner. And more, as you relate in a marriage you find that marriage is often a reflection of your won bad habits, weaknesses and failures.

“One of the best wedding gifts God gave you was a full-length mirror called your spouse. Had there been a card attached, it would have said, ‘Here’s to helping you discover what you’re really like!’ Gary & Betsy Ricucci quoted in Sacred Marriage p.89

- Spouses acknowledge their sin is just as heinous to God and hurtful to the other spouse as they view the other’s sin. In conflict we should humbly suspect ourselves first rather than jump to contempt and outrage at the other person (Harvey, p.63-64). Conflict and obstacles are opportunities to overcome for spiritual growth. View your spouse as God’s ordained instrument to shape and refine your character and growth. Since marriage is about God’s glory, it is ultimately not predominantly about your fulfillment, emotional satisfaction or romantic pleasure. Marriage is more about your holiness than your happiness.
“for ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23
“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us...If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.” 1John 1:8, 10
“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” James 4:6

Marriage is magnificent, radical love (Ephesians 2:10 - 5:33).

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (2:10)

“Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (5:25)

Magnificent, radical love in marriage is the process of saying “I DO” to “I WILL”. It takes powerful and persevering commitment to each other. As you look at Ephesians 5:25-33 we see the radical roles of love: (note some background context of 4:25-32 is about forgiven sinners forgive sin; 5:3 calls us to holy faithfulness and no sexual immorality and 5:18 to have Spirit-filled lives and marriages).

Marriage makes disciples (Ephesians 5:31 - 6:9).

“This mystery is profound and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” (5:32)

As it has been seen, marriage mysteriously and marvelously reflects the relationship between Christ and the church (5:32). The call and command of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Likewise, the call of the marriage is to make disciples of one another and even multiplied into others. This can be expressed as spouses mentor other spouses for godly marriages and for ministry in the kingdom of God (see Aquilla & Priscilla in Acts 18). However, most specifically it is expressed in producing godly offspring.

Malachi 2:15-16 “Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.”

- **Understand** Biblical vision for parenthood (see session on **“Shepherding A Child’s Heart”**)
- **Connect** with church (people) body to share support and encouragement
- **Invest** in the lives of others to multiply your marriage and make disciples of Jesus.

Special note: if you cannot have children remind yourself that marriage is not merely adding more people to the world as much as it is increasing more followers of Jesus into eternity.

Marriage fights with faith (Ephesians 6:10-18).

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” (6:9-10)

In the beginning life, marriage and family were a dream reality. God’s plan was very good. But after the Fall each of these involve a fight of faith to follow God’s good design. Immediately after Adam & Eve’s sin came children who fought and one murdered the other. Talk about sibling rivalry! And the generations proceeding them continued conflict, greed, envy, and idolatrous ways.

Paul links this fight of faith in Ephesians 6 with the “armor of God”. It is no accident that after Paul’s instruction for family roles (husbands, wives, children) to conclude with a firm reminder of spiritual warfare. Living out God’s commands and blueprints for marriage and family must be aided by the “strength of his might” and the “whole armor of God”.

- Be aware there is a battle - Be alert to enemies - Be armored with right weapons

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” (6:9-10)

FAMILY MATTERS: GOD ON SEX Song of Solomon

Please note this session is likely PG-13ish.

The content is not explicit but will be expressed clearly for married couples from Scriptural references.

If someone you knew was kidnapped, what would you do? Would you be upset? Would you be moved to action: contact authorities, draw awareness, attempt rescue? Of course you would because you respond to that which is precious to you.

In this session, we are going to talk about a precious gift of God – sex. Unfortunately, sex has been hijacked by secular views and values and it is time for Christians to return it to its proper place. The stereotypical view of the church on the topic of sex has been something like this: “sex is dirty so save it for the one you love”. This is unfortunate since God is the creator of everything and everything He made is good and for His glory (Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 1:3-14). To be even clearer, **sex is not sinful but sacred**. There is beauty and blessing within the boundaries that God designed for the act of sex. Christians must not allow secular society to hijack God’s handiwork. The Bible does not shy away from the relevant issues we face today in contemporary life, marriage and family.

What about young people, singles or even older seniors? The truth is that this subject touches every age. Young people need to learn how to appropriately and biblically view sex and their bodies. Singles are highly tempted in this area with large percentages having premarital sex. And even older seniors whom are single, widowed or formerly married are on occasion in some relationship where there is temptation for sexual immorality.

Supremely, it seems that God is so interested and committed to the intimate aspects of marriage that He gave us an entire book of the Bible dedicated to the subject: Song of Songs or Song of Solomon (SOS). SOS is a collection of love songs from Solomon to his lover. It celebrates the vivid joys of devotion, love and intimacy in a marriage relationship. The author uses poetic and at times sensual language to portray the beauty and selflessness of their love relationship.

Marriage is the environment for sex (SOS 2:7, 3:5, 8:4).

- Sex was God’s idea (Genesis 1:28) but it is not a god (1 Corinthians 6:12-13).

- Sex was God’s idea but it is not a god

The Bible provides boundaries and the environment for sex is marriage

SOS 1:1-4 “the king has brought me into his chambers”

SOS 2:7; 3:5; 8:4 “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.”

1 Corinthians 6:12-13, 18-20 “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me but I will not be enslaved by anything....The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body...Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a

person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

Because sex is God’s idea, there is a natural curiosity for us (even children) to explore and ask questions.

Parents should teach children proper and biblical view of sexuality.

“[Parents should] be intentional and purposeful in what you want to teach, but hold loosely how and when you teach things...For younger children, know that it’s more than okay to briefly introduce a topic at one stage and come back to it on a deeper or more explicit level at the next stage. The most effective way to teach healthy sexuality is to take advantage of spontaneous teachable moments whenever possible instead of more formal talks.” Jim Burns, *Teaching Your Children Healthy Sexuality*, pp.71-72.

Toddlers: God made boys & girls; begin discussing appropriate/inappropriate touching

Elementary: God made your body; begin discussing anatomy

Pre-teen & Teens: God made you for Him; purity of heart, body, mind, eyes. Note at this point knowledge is almost common place due to media & culture, though curiosity still exists.

- Sex is relationally exclusive (Genesis 2:24; Proverbs 5:15-20, 6:28-32; Malachi 2:14).
Proverbs 5:18-19 “Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth... Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.”

Your spouse is the only one whom should stimulate sexual desire. Be extremely careful of various forms of entertainment (tv shows, commercials, movies, books, over-admiration of celebrities or even non-celebrities) that would tempt us to crave sexual fulfillment outside of God’s design. See Jesus’ words in Matthew 5 and also Paul’s “not even a hint” (and all others “flee sexual immorality”) concerning LUST. Simply put, lust is not love. The past decade has produced more research and insight into lust being harmful – literally, porn of all varieties distorts the brain and creates an addiction that can be greater than even cocaine.

*Note: Sex by nature is relational, therefore any attempts at making it solitary is a deviation from God’s intended plan.

- Sex is profoundly intimate / physical & spiritual (Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:15-16)
This “one flesh” union describes the intimacy both physically and spiritually that takes place between a man and a woman. It should be a regular celebration and expression of the marriage bond. Paul says a consistent sex-life is a protection against immorality. A spouse should not get caught up in exact frequency as much as the focus should be on cultivating friendship and intimacy.
1 Corinthians 7:3-5 “each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”
- Sex is selfless & satisfying (SOS 1:1-4, 4:1-16, 5:10-16/6:4-7:10; Proverbs 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5; Philippians 2:3-4)

In summary, sex is an expression of love. It is not “the” expression but is one of multiple means to serve your spouse. At this point it is helpful for husband and wife to note their personal preferences for what brings them joy and helps them to feel loved by the other.

READ Song Of Solomon 4:1-7

Men should love their wife with verbal support

Solomon tells the Shulammitte she is “beautiful” 15x in this book; here twice. He calls her “my love” twice in this passage. He praises her eyes, hair, teeth, lips, tongue, mouth, cheeks, neck, breasts, and says she is “altogether beautiful, there is no flaw in you” (v.7). All of this is conversation, indeed foreplay, before the act of sex. Women creatures of the ear and men must learn to love them with words. Tommy Nelson says, “To a great extent, she thinks and feels [about herself] the way a man leads her to think and feel.”

Women should love their husbands with visual stimulation

As women are creatures of the ear so men are of the eye. Solomon praises the Shulammitte by looking at her from head to toe.

- Eyes as doves: purity, peace, tender and gentle. She has been calmed by his kind words.
- Hair like goats: beautiful mountain scene. She lets her hair down to show her beauty and readiness.
- Teeth & lips like flock & scarlet: clean & bright teeth (none are missing!) with a lovely kissable mouth.
- Cheeks like pomengrate: attractive and attentive with desire (pomengrates considered aphrodisiac)
- Neck like tower: she is tall, graceful and confident
- Breasts like fawns & mountains: soft, gentle yet adventurous. Solomon is ready to explore her body.

SOS 4:8-16 Their love is captivating (v.9), companionship (v.10) and clean (v.10-16) – a locked garden (purity)

David Jeremiah in “What The Bible Says About Love, Marriage & Sex” asks: “Do we really need a play-by-play account of a man’s wedding night? We do and here is why: We really need to know that the Word of God endorses the wholesomeness of sexual love within marriage.” (p.152)

Principles for Physical Intimacy

Attention with time

Affirmation with word & deed

Affection with touch

Adventure with experiences

Accordance with dreams, goals, purpose

Sexual Violations

- Immorality (immodesty, fornication/co-habitation, lust, prostitution, masturbation, animals, incest, child abuse, rape) (Leviticus 18:23-24/20:15-16; Leviticus 18:6; Leviticus 19:29/ Deuteronomy 23:18; Matthew 5:28-30; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 10:8; Ephesians 5:1-5; 2 Timothy 2:22)

- Adultery (Ex 20:14; Leviticus 20:10; SOS 2:7, 3:5, 8:4; ; Matthew 19:17-18; Hebrews 13:4)
- Divorce (Leviticus 21:7; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Malachi 2:16)
- Polygamy (Deuteronomy 17:17; Leviticus 18:18; Jeremiah 5:8; Malachi 2:14-15)
- Homosexuality (see pp.6-7 and also title “Culture Wars” of this booklet)
- Deprival (1Corinthians 7:3-5)

Marriage can be an environment for sexual conflict (SOS 2:15, 5:2-8)

SOS 2:15 “Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.” As much hopefulness, joy and pleasure there is in marriage and marital intimacy, there is unfortunately also conflict and heartbreak in many relationships. We may joke about the differences of men & women or the little spats and sparrings of these relationships, but the truth is we must pay attention to both the “little things” and the “big things” of relational conflict. In SOS 2:15, the Shulammitte gives the command to catch these foxes. These “little foxes” represent those challenges & crisis that can creep into the marriage, almost unnoticed, and perform untold damage to the unity of your marriage covenant.

“Foxes are little animals, not large ones. You hardly notice them and they are good at hiding. Only when damage is done do you even realize they were there. Issues like role responsibilities, conflict resolution, goals, expectations, finances, sex, spiritual compatibility, interpersonal compatibility, social compatibility and in-law relations do not just naturally work in a relationship. They must be addressed and worked through on an ongoing basis if marriage is to grow and develop.” (Akin p.88)

“Little foxes” represent those challenges & crisis that can creep into the marriage, almost unnoticed, and perform untold damage to the unity of your covenant

A few “foxes” in terms of marital intimacy SOS 5:2-8

5:2-3 I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking. ‘Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.’ I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?

Fox of Communication:

Shulammitte expected Solomon to come home early but instead he stayed out late, likely worrying. After a long day he expected a warm welcome with his arrival. Instead, she had already went to bed. Perhaps she gives a subtle dig – I’m naked in bed but not for you! Their custom was for separate bedrooms and to wash body before entering the bed; she would already be clean and to get up would cause her to repeat the process. If only they would have better communication!

Learning to speak “male” and “female” can be like learning a foreign language. Men are typically fact oriented whereas women are feeling oriented. To underestimate this difference is like preparing to lick a moving fan blade. Communication involves both LISTENING with ears (genuine listening. “mirroring”/repeat technique”. ask questions and clarify.) & eyes (eye contact and body language demonstrates care and value). SPEAKING with hands (how you say something is as important as what is said. tone/attitude) and with your heart (honesty, sincerity, loving and constructive develop trust).

5:4-7 My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him but found him not; I called him, but he

gave me no answer. The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls.

Fox of Complacency or Change

The Shulammitte hears Solomon's words and sees his attempts to open the door and finally reconsiders. But it was too late, he was gone. It is likely his feelings were hurt. He turns resentment into retaliation by isolating himself from her calling. Silence seldom solves problems; hurt people hurt people. In turn, she experiences the regret and inward beatings of her soul for her actions. Relationships involve change.

I noted previously that men enter marriage thinking she will never change and women enter marriage thinking she will change him quickly. But the reality is both spouses are constantly changing – emotionally, spiritually and even physically. Change is inescapable. When change occurs the couple must learn to continue their relationship and not become complacent.

Christian love is unconditional; it is a love that perseveres regardless of circumstances. Strangely, married people who are bitter often turn their bodies into a weapon used to manipulate and punish each other with sex. This should not be. Renew your love and Rekindle your romance.

5:8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.

Fox of Contentment

After the Shulammitte experiences her regret she renews her commitment of love to Solomon. Rather than continue the cycle of conflict and contempt (bitterness), she finds contentment in her spouse. She does not seek escape or comfort in the arms of someone else; instead she pursues her husband with greater intensity (5:10-16) and indeed it is reciprocated through the completion of the book (6:3 – 8:14).

Christian relationships are/should be unlike worldly love. Christian marriages should be able to deal with conflict without suspecting the next words to be “lawyer” and “divorce”. I often say in wedding messages, “Christian love is unwavering and means you cannot say divorce – you can say doghouse, just not divorce”. Marriage takes committed teamwork and covenant tenacity to last a lifetime. **You have a choice today in your marriage: You can become bitter or you can become better.**

Marriage, love and sex are sustained by the very flames of the Lord (SOS 8:6-7; I Corinthians 13:4-7; Hebrews 13:4; I John 4:7-13)

This Song/book is often neglected, criticized or its interpretation altered for its subject rather than focus on God. However, as we have seen, God is in the very details of this subject – He is the creator and architect of it and everything is for His glory. Twice in this book we see God show up:

SOS 5:1c “Eat. Friends. Drink and be drunk with love.”

Scholars note there are 111 lines from 1:2 to 4:15, and there are 111 lines from 5:2 to 8:14. The point is that Solomon has carefully and creatively constructed this love letter so that we see the center of the love relationship between himself and his bride – the outside guest, the Lord of life and of their marriage saying, “Eat, friends, drink and be drunk with love!” **What a beautiful thought; love your spouse to the glory of God!**

SOS 8:6-7 “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.”

Again, as this Song/book concludes, the Shulammitte speaks of their love relationship. She asks her man to set her as a seal, showing great care and value to her. Just as we may install an alarm system on our house to protect and seal it, so it is with the seal of these lover’s hearts. The fire of their love is secure and fueled by the greatest flame – that of the Lord God.

Marriage is meant to last. This is so because it is a picture of God’s love for His people.

Romans 8:38-39 “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Ephesians 3:18-19 “[I pray for you to have] the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”

This kind of love is not natural but supernatural. It can only be received by God’s grace. His great love for you is on full display through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

FAMILY MATTERS: SHEPHERDING A CHILD'S HEART

Proverbs 4:23

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life.” Proverbs 4:23

As you consider this topic, this chapter will present two truths to teach children with multiple principles for families and churches to know. And we must also remember that parenting cannot be reduced to an exact science as it deals with the complex dynamics of people and relationships. Of course there are numerous philosophies/theories & methods on raising children. Further, many parents will have varying parenting styles & approaches, especially on the variety of topics each face. This message is not out to present the grand, full-proof formula for success but simply to share Biblical truths and principles that may be applied slightly differently in each home or setting. Ultimately, God's plan is far greater than man's plan; *“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).*

Teach children to worship (discipleship)

The heart of parenting, and all of life, is the heart. No one is neutral as we are all born with a worship orientation; in fact a worship disorder called sin! The goal of parenting is to shape a child's worship orientation toward the proper place—the person of Jesus Christ. This does not happen by mere behavioral correction but must go deeper to transform a child's heart.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

- Discipleship starts early.

It cannot be emphasized enough the need to expose children to spiritual truth during their earliest years. George Barna (Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions) says that a child's moral, spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional and relational foundations of people's lives are determined primarily before age 13.

- Discipleship takes intentionality.

Your child will not know or understand spiritual truth by default. In fact the opposite will happen, and perhaps disastrous consequences may occur. As parents, you must set some goals for your child's spiritual growth. You must also understand how to accomplish such goals. I believe in this area our expectations are too low. We need to be challenged to raise the expectations for our children and as we do I believe our children will rise to the occasion.

- Family Devotions: Reading Scripture, singing, praying and talking about issues of faith together should become a regular habit. Talk with your church leadership how to best lead this. Fathers, remember you are the spiritual leaders.
- Family Traditions: Special days like birthdays, anniversaries and holidays create a sense of family unity and point to greater realities for spiritual truth.

- Discipleship happens relationally.

When Jesus wanted to make disciples he called people to “be with” him (Mark 3:14). If spending time, talking with your children is routine in the early years then it will not be abnormal in the later years. Further, this is also where the partnership with other parents and the church fit well. By the family and the church relationally walking alongside each other we can set our sights on raising spiritual champions for Christ and growing godly generations.

Andy Stanley says that we are making our children experience rich but relationally poor. We give our children experiences in school, sports, competition, trips and travel but we cannot forget that our children long to just be with us

Teach children to obey (discipline).

Ephesians 6:1-4 “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Colossians 3:20-21 “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.”

- Discipline is loving and relational

Proverbs 3:11-12 “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproofs him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”

Proverbs 22:15 “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.”

As parents are God’s representative authority to shepherd children toward right and wrong, they must remember that punishment should never be out of a anger, embarrassment or retribution. Correction is always for the purpose of teaching children about the consequences of sin, disobeying the authority of God and experiencing the forgiveness of God.

Correction is not to be feared for it does teach the reality of consequences. Ultimately, correction prepares children for that day when eternal destinies will be fixed. Will your child be ready for this day by the way you have disciplined them? Lovingly point them to their desperate need of God’s forgiveness for sin.

Parents should take their child’s age and unique personality and temperament into account and beware that some children may respond to alternative forms of positive or negative consequences and reinforcement. But remember, discipline is not conditioning by stimuli to behave a certain way—it must be in the context of a parent-child relationship shepherding the heart to know and love God.

- Discipline is a team effort and unified approach.

Proverbs 6:20, 23 “My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching. ..For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life... to preserve you”

Remember:

- Correction must involve questions: Why did you do that? What makes you think that was a good choice? Where did you learn that? What do you think the next steps should be?

- Avoid delayed obedience tactics (counting or increasing voice tones that lead to yelling, wait until your father gets home....etc.). Consistency is central to correction.

- Joy is a byproduct of obedience. Show how obedience brings reward. Pointing out obedience in your children as Christ-likeness should be emphasized as much, if not more, as correction from ungodliness.

Tedd Tripp, SACH p.50

“Recognizing that God has called you to function as His agent defines your task as a parent. Our culture has reduced parenting to providing care. Parents often see the task in these narrow terms. The child must have food, clothes, a bed and some quality time. In sharp contrast to such a weak view, God has called you to a more profound task than being a care-provider. You shepherd your Child in God’s behalf. The task God has given you is not one that can be conveniently scheduled. It is a pervasive task. Training and shepherding is going on whenever you are with your children. Whether walking, talking or resting, you must be involved in helping your child to understand life, himself and his [or her] needs from a biblical perspective.”

- Discipline leads to righteousness.

Titus 2:11-14 “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

God’s grace and forgiveness is not just pardon for sin but more power not to sin. Evidence of a child’s heart transforming to faith is a sorrow for sin, dislike for disobedience and genuine growth in godly character (Galatians 5:16-24).

Ultimately, we may not be perfect parents but we can be praying parents.

Pray to your Heavenly Father, for wisdom and compassion in shepherding your child’s heart.

FAMILY MATTERS: PEACEMAKING FOR FAMILIES

James 4:1-10

- Remembering Eden with Adam & Eve

The couple was newly married. They still had a sparkle in their eyes and their hearts still skipped a beat when they were in each other's presence. He spoke to her saying "you complete me" and after she said "you had me at hello"... she called him "my one and only".

After the honeymoon they returned home. They spent many of their days together farming and gardening. And then there was that ONE DAY when the wife just knew her man was just a little dull and not the sharpest knife in the drawer; she went and led her husband to spend currency where they should have never been in the first place. It was a transaction they would never forget and forever cause division in the home. Shame, guilt and brokenness would stain their relationship. Intimacy was interrupted. He would blame her and she would make alternate excuses. Ultimately, they both were wrong. But even worse than their own brokenness was that they had broken the heart of God. What was once beautiful would now need restoration... or better, a Rescuer!

God is author of all good and desires relational unity among his creation. Yet, sin has entered and therefore conflict is to be expected. Domineering husbands and nagging wives create marital mess; rebellious teens and jealous step-family members create parental plights. Happy homes are turned in- to battle grounds. No family or relationship is immune to conflict.

- Conflict in the Bible

In a sense, most of the NT books of the Bible were written because there was conflict among believers and churches that needed solving. The Letters became a polemic against false teaching and adverse behavior for Christians.

The point is that not all conflict is negative or wrong. In fact, conflict can be constructive:

- Conflict communicates & clarifies expectations (be leery of relationships or even churches without conflict)
- Conflict can be a catalyst for change

The key is how you approach conflict. Ken Sande says there are three ways families can approach conflict:

Peace-fakers: denying that problems exist, always giving in to one person's demands or even growing cold and distant from family members

Peace-breakers: stubborn selfishness, relying on manipulation, unhealthy sarcasm, verbal or physical abuse, and anger to compel others to give in to one's demands.

Peace-makers: humble reliance on grace and the power of mutual forgiveness and love that empowers personal, emotional, and spiritual growth.

Many relationships, families and churches become paralyzed when there is conflict because they do not understand each person's role of becoming a peacemaker. Controversy and conflict usually occurs because of unmet desires. Essentially, behind every case of unmet expectation is unrepentant sin. People do not fall out of love and charity as much as they fall out of repentance and forgiveness.

Conflict progresses from heart desires of selfishness (James 4:1-5).

The apostle James raises the question, “What causes wars [armed conflict] and fights [quarrels w/o weapons] among you?” and then answers the question saying, “It is not your passions at war within you?” James uses powerful imagery for the destructive nature of relationships where harmful sarcasm, disrespectful attitudes and violent tempers have gone unchecked and unbridled. Rather than make attempts to evaluate the opinions or pinpoint the symptoms, James gets to the source – the heart – of the problem: selfish passions.

Our desires, for good or bad; can be powerful influences. And if we are not careful, even good desires can turn into unintended conflict and idols of the heart. And obviously, wrongful desires can turn into unhealthy actions. When these desires go unmet, typically controversy and conflict are not far behind. Essentially, behind every case of unmet expectation lies unrepentant sin. “*You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel... You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions*” (James 4:2-3).

So what shall we do with our passions and desires?

Desires can be God-given but should not become God-substitutes. What do you want most in life?

Psalm 37:4 “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

Psalm 73:25 “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.”

When we are not satisfied with God and the desires of our heart turn to pride, performance, possessions and earthly pleasures (God-substitutes); then we will without a doubt be disappointed. And as unmet desires dive deeper into our heart and we dwell on the disappointments, the desires elevate into demands and the downward spiral of conflict continues.

God-substitutes or heart idols are things that replace God from His rightful place. **ONLY GOD CAN BRING US FULFILLMENT AND JOY** (John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life and more abundant”)

When in conflict, ask “WHY – why does this matter?” If you can answer with sincerity then pursue the solution to your conflict. If not, then repent as needed and cease conflict.

Conflict resolution progresses from humble dependence on the grace of God (James 4:6-12).

- Pride is the root of conflict.
- Humble service to God and others leads to the intimacy we seek from relationships.
- Pride is painful; humility is healing!

Addressing Conflict biblically

Jesus prizes peace.

Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Confrontation is not politically correct today. “Don’t judge me” is the motto for a society that prides itself on pleasure, relativism and tolerance trumping truth. The Bible and Jesus never say “don’t judge” without qualification—only that when we do judge, not to do it with pride or hypocrisy.

Matthew 7:1-5

Judgment starts with humility not hypocrisy
Removing logs to remove specks

Matthew 18:15-20

Approach directly
Involve others when necessary
Reconciliation is the goal of any discipline

Galatians 6:1-5

Christians are reconcilers (2Corinthians 5:18-19)

Ephesians 4:25-32

Honesty and truth are essential
Anger at principles not people is appropriate
Speak constructively not destructively
Bitterness bites, Forgiveness frees
Glean from the Gospel (Matthew 6:14-15)

A-B-C's of Conflict

Anger Benevolence Compassion & Contrition

Discuss

- ◇ What is it like to be you in this marriage?
- ◇ What expectations do you have for your spouse?
- ◇ What qualities in your parental’s family do you want to emulate and which avoid?
- ◇ With humility and repentance, will you share your list of sins against the marriage?
- ◇ With humility and constructive approach, will you share your list of lies your spouse may believe about you and how to counter perspective?
- ◇ Read the repentance and forgiveness Bible passages on the next page. How can these apply to your life and family?

Communication Tips

Listen with ears: mirroring or repeating what is said; ask questions to clarify
Listen with eyes: body language and eye contact display care and value
Speak with hands: how you say something is as important as what you say
Speak with heart: be honest, sincere, loving and respectful to develop trust
Open Issues: compromise
Closed Issues: confront

Four Elements of Communication

1. Our heart intention (the message I meant to communicate)
2. Our mouth reality (the message that actually was spoken)
3. Our ears perception (the message that was heard—based on words, tone and emotion)
4. Our mind interpretation (the message we understood to be communicated)

Understanding Personality

Know how person responds to conflict (active vs. passive).

Know the relationship for what has helped and what has hurt in the past.

Understanding Confession & Repentance (Ken Sande, Peacemaking for Families, p.61)

Address everyone involved

To whom do you need to confess?

Avoid “if, but and maybe”

What excuses or blaming do you need to avoid?

Admit specifically

Name sin as sin without minimizing actions

Apologize

Consider how others feel as result of your sin

Accept consequences

Can you help reverse the damage you caused?

Alter behavior

What changes need to be made?

immediate, verifiable and unconditional

Ask for forgiveness and allow time from offended

Forgiveness does not always mean trust

4 Promises Of Forgiveness

- 1) I will not dwell on incident.
- 2) I will not use incident as a dig.
- 3) I will not dialogue with others about this incident.
- 4) I will not allow this incident divide us from seeking restoration.

Additional things to remember in this process

- Repentance is a change of mind/heart that leads to change of actions. It contains hatred for and brokenness over personal sin. Read Psalms 32, 51; Joel 2:12-13; Luke 3:8; 2Corinthians 7:10.
- Forgiveness is the pardoning (not accepting) of wrong behavior. It does not mean forgetting wrong behavior but it will lead to freeing the other person from guilt and shame. The relationship may have security but the fellowship and intimacy need restoration. Read Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-35; Luke 15.
 - Note: Forgiveness can remove eternal punishment but often temporal consequences remain; especially sexual sin (1Cor 6:18).
- Restoration is a marathon not a sprint. It is a process of repairing something to its original or better condition. Learning to trust, warming to affection & intimacy take time.

FAMILY MATTERS: MASTERING MONEY WITHOUT IT MASTERING YOU

Do you have enough money? Have you ever argued about money? What is your financial legacy plan for your children?

Financial issues are known to be the number one issue in marriage conflicts and separations. Therefore, every couple and family must have an agreed upon plan for how they will manage their money. Further, we must understand money from God's perspective so we learn to not be mastered by money.

Jesus says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Matthew 6:19-24)

To be clear, the Bible does not condemn wealth as many biblical characters had wealth, and there are several examples of using financial gain in generous ways for the glory of God and advancement of His kingdom.

- Multiple Biblical characters had wealth: Abraham, Job at beginning & end, David as King, Solomon, Macedonian Church, Paul at times, and others.
- Nehemiah 8:10 Ezra and Nehemiah encourage the people to celebrate God in a lavish manner.
- John 2:1-12 Jesus makes good wine, not cheap, watered down wine.
- John 12:1-8 Mary anoints Jesus' feet with expensive (year's wages) perfume and Jesus says "the poor you always have with you..."

The point of luxury is understanding how to leverage money, power and position for influence and advancement of God's kingdom, not our own where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. Christians should not be motivated by worldly gain. Wealth is uncertain and today's gains are tomorrow's losses. So, we should not put our hope in money but in God who provides all our needs (1 Timothy 6:17).

"When God provides more money, we often think, *This is a blessing*. Well, yes, but it would be just as scriptural to think, *This is a test*... God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving."

Christians are to be motivated by godliness with contentment (1 Timothy 6:6-10; 17-19). Paul tells Timothy that true godliness leads to contentment. Christians would do well to learn some keys toward contentment.

1) Remember earthly wealth is fleeting. Paul says, “we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world” (1 Timothy 6:7). Someone puts it another way saying, “There are no uhaul’s behind a hearse.” Proverbs 23:4-5 says, “Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.”

2) Believe God provides and pleases. Paul says, “if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content... God richly provides us with everything to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:8, 17). Our Lord is the Shepherd; and we shall not want, He makes me lie down in green pastures... anoints our head in oil and our cup overflows” (Psalm 23). God is most pleasing to us more than the treasures of the world (Proverbs 15:16; 24:3-4).

3) Understand the meaning of money. Paul says, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

There are several applications for the meaning of money.

3a) View work as worthwhile. A healthy concept of work gives understanding that money doesn’t grow on trees and must be earned. When we work hard to earn the right and responsibility to make purchases then we learn to be content instead of feel entitled to possessions provided on a silver spoon.

3b) Purchase items for usefulness not status. Cars, clothing, and other possessions can be used to establish an identity of prestige rather than the humble reminder God provides all things. Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith and colleagues conducted a study focused on the spiritual attitudes and moral beliefs of emerging adults (age 18-23). They discovered well over half agreed that their well-being can be measured by what they own, that buying more things would make them happier, and that they get a lot of pleasure simply from shopping and buying things.” We are raising a generation that barely knows the difference between need and greed.

- Dump your debt. Create a plan to reduce and prevent adding foolish debt. If you decide to enter debt, do so with the right motivation (1 Corinthians 10:31) and the right means to repay. Since God permits lending, there seems to be permission to have some level of debt (cf. Exodus 22:25; Luke 6:35; Psalm 37:26).
- Decide who will oversee finances. Usually, one spouse is the saver and the other the spender; how ironic! While both of you should communicate and work together on your finances, usually one is a little better skilled/practiced to oversee the finances.

- Discern best usage of plastic. While credit cards can provide convenience, they are not always a wise usage of payment with their interest rates.
- Discern best usage of loans.

3c) Be very careful of comparisons. Comparisons often tempt and trap us into ruin and destruction. We need to learn God made us uniquely and be content with what we have. When we envy others we are doubting God's wisdom and care. Further, the greener grass syndrome forgets the grass still needs to be mowed. Proverbs 15:16 "Better is a little with fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it."

Create a budget that fits your family.

Proverbs 21:5 "The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty."

Proverbs 22:3 – "A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it."

3d) Remember risk can be rewarding or reckless. We should be highly skeptical of get rich quick schemes. We must have prudence in our purchases to avoid impulse buying that is wasteful, or worse accumulating debt. As Dave Ramsey says, "Don't buy things you don't need, with money you don't have, to impress people you don't like." Further, our aim for accumulating wealth is never an end in itself but for God's glory. *Proverbs 22:7-9 "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender. Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of his fury will fail. Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor."*

Cultivate the habit of generosity. Paul says, "*the rich in this present age... are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life" (1 Tim 6:17-19).* Generosity is joyful. Jesus instructs us that it is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). God owns 100% of all we have and earn. When we have this perspective, giving ~10% and keeping ~90% is more than a great deal!

Proverbs 3:9-10 "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine."

Proverbs 14:21 "Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor."

Proverbs 14:31 "Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him."

Proverbs 13:22 "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous."

We do not coast to contentment but must daily fight for it. Paul says, "*But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:11-12).* We must guard our hearts against greed and fight for faith (Prov 4:23; Luke 9:23). We can have cash in our hands but lack peace in our heart... or you can fill in clothes in closet, toys in garage, savings in retirement... Contentment with Christ is the meaning to all life.

FAMILY MATTERS: MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND CULTURE WARS Genesis 1, 18-19

God is God and God is good. These two truths remind us His authority and charity are holy and helpful for humanity (Genesis 1-2). God is the Architect of all life and love. However, because He is the Architect then that also implies His authority on the way life and love are carried out. Today's world is hotly debating the sacred institution of marriage and family life. This booklet has proposed the biblical definition for each. A further look into this subject hopes to prepare Christians for understanding how to address the culture on such topics such as homosexuality.

Dr. Sam Williams notes the importance of understanding differentiating identifying categories of orientation, actions and lifestyle for homosexuality ("A Christian Psychology of and Response to Homosexuality" accessed <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/resources/christian-psychology-of-and-response-to-homosexuality>):

SSA: Descriptor of person's sexual desires; though can be weak, moderate or strong and vary in short-term or longevity. This descriptor says nothing of how a person feels about such desires or how they view themselves as an identity.

Approximately 6% men; 4.5% of women report some degree of SSA

SSO: Descriptor of a person's sexual desires, which are pre-dominant and persistent.

Approximately 2% of men; 1% women report SSO

Possible to be SSA/O for an individual person but otherwise hetero-sexual (HSO)

L-G: Descriptor of person Lesbian/Gay who has chosen to adopt their SSO as an identity and viewed as morally neutral or positive alternative to HSO.

Approximately 1.7% or 4million persons; another 1.8% estimates identification as bi-sexual

John Piper says, "There are not simply three groups: Heterosexual, Homosexual and Bisexual. There are hundreds of variations of impulses that make up our peculiar sexual identities. This means that 'change' is not a movement from one of three groups to another of three groups. Rather, it is a totally unpredictable reconfiguration of dozens of impulses and desires. And these desires and impulses are interwoven with dozens of personal and relational and spiritual realities, all of which are moving and shifting as God and his word and his people come to bear on the totality of a person's life."

(<http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/same-sex-attraction-and-the-inevitability-of-change>)

Homosexuality is a complex issue. This is not a science or political project but real people and their identities. Homosexuals; or SSA/SSO/L-G-B-T; have had genuine questions, doubts, confusions, struggles and moral dilemmas when it comes to their “coming out”. And some of whom have a faith background ask questions like,

Was I born this way? Did God make me like this?

If God’s design is heterosexuality, why do I have these feelings or desires?

Is my sexual orientation sinful? Can my sexual orientation change?

The point is that unless you put faces, names and relationships to this issue these questions will never make sense to you. Further, the entire issue will merely be viewed as a cultural war that must be won at any cost. That is the nature of war – fighting, hurting, murdering and a lot of violence. And unfortunately, that is what we are getting in society today; while civilians are trying to communicate there are bombs & bullets flying over their heads so that walls become built and no progress towards solutions. At an attempt at honesty, I am not sure that either side (Christians & Non-Christians) fully understand the issues at hand.

That being said, God is not silent on this issue. Indeed, that is the focus of this message – “What does the Bible say about homosexuality?” But as we recognize the teaching of the Bible we do so from its own perspective not our own. We must bring out meaning from what the Bible says rather than bring meaning what we read into the Bible. In other words, while some may want to make homosexuality the landmark issue of the day, the Bible does not. There is a greater narrative and intention behind God’s revelation than the removal of particular pockets of sin. God is on a rescue mission for humanity from all sin, not a cultural war against a few isolated sins.

Homosexuality and the World

Genetic:

So, those with SSA/SSO look at the world, they say “I was born this way. God didn’t make a mistake”

Normal

Those with SSA/SSO act on their feelings and preferred desires saying, “I can love whomever I want.”

DSM 1973

The move toward the official acceptance of homosexuality in modern American society started in 1973 when the American Psychological Association removed homosexuality from its list of psychological diseases in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. The wake of this decision has seen tidal waves and in the past decade a tsunami of influence in culture to normalize homosexuality. 7+ states along with D.C. have recognized SSMarriages with another 5 recognizing civil unions. 11 countries have made SSM legal.

Christian

Ironically, today’s post-modern society has drawn a new circle in combining homosexuality and its behaviors as in step with the Christian faith.

- It is said that Jesus never judges/condemns homosexuality (argument from silence).

This is a weak argument considering Jesus did not directly speak about bestiality or pedophilia. Further, Jesus does lift up the Biblical ideal of marriage as a man & woman (referencing Genesis 2:24 – Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8)

- It is said the Bible has been misinterpreted/socialized.

These are scholars who offer highly creative speculation and attempting theological gymnastics at best and simply blatantly disregarding Scripture and mocking God at worse.

Homosexuality and the Word

Genetic

The Bible would not contradict a confession that homosexuality is an internal preference or if science found a “gay-gene”. The Bible still would affirm homosexuality as sin and along with every other sin say that our hearts are foolish, desperately wicked, evil, suppressing truth and innately sinful (Proverbs 14:12; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19; Romans 1:19, 3:23, 5:19).

Sam Williams says of nature vs. nurture

“there may be some *biological contributions in some persons* would not be surprising and does seem consistent with the research. The recognition that biology may play a role need not be resisted by Christians since God has created us as embodied souls, psychosomatic beings, and all things, including our bodies and brains and genes, have been infected by sin. In addition, that something such as the body or the brain is influential, or even formative, does not mean it is morally or spiritually determinative. It seems reasonable to accept, and clearly consistent with Scripture, that bodies and brains and genes along with parents and peers and cultures all play influential or formative roles in our lives. But that doesn’t mean they are determinative.”

Normal

Again, sin is sin. The truth is that all of our sex lives – every look, feel, fantasy, touch, thought will be judged before a holy God. The Bible presents a picture where sexual deviation & immorality is characteristic of us all [see page 17 God on Sex: Sexual Violations] (Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-20; Galatians 5:19-21; I Thessalonians 4:3-8)

Christian

To be a Christian means to be a follower of Christ; one who loves God, lives as Christ and lessens the control of sin in their life. A person cannot remain in a pattern of sin and remain in Christ at the same time. This does not mean that a Christian does not sin but it means they are willing to give up what takes them away from the holiness of God.

1 John 2:3-6, 3:4-6 *3 This is how we are sure that we have come to know Him: by keeping His commands. 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” without keeping His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is perfected. This is how we know we are in Him: 6 the one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked. ... 4 Everyone who commits sin also breaks the law; sin is the breaking of law. 5 You know that He was revealed so that He might take away sins, and there is no sin in Him. 6 Everyone who remains in Him does not sin; everyone who sins has not seen Him or known Him.*

What does the Bible say?

Genesis 18 Abraham intercedes for Sodom “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city? (v.23-24) Suppose 45... Suppose 40... Suppose 20...Suppose 10?

An entire city was destroyed for ongoing homosexual practice (Sin of Sodom & Gomorrah is mentioned numerous times. See Isaiah 1:9-10, 3:9, 13:19; Jeremiah 23:14, 39:18, 50:40; Lamentations 4:6; Ezekiel 16:46-56; Amos 4:11; Zephaniah 2:9; Matthew 10:15, 11:23-24; Luke 10:12, 17:29; Romans 9:29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7; Revelation 11:8).

Genesis 19:4-11 Men of Sodom surround Lot's house to have sexual relations with Lot's male visitors.

Revisionists scholars have proposed that Sodom's sin was gang rape (if so then God is unjust in his judgment since the action never actually occurred).

Another proposition is that Sodom's sin was inhospitality (To know them not sexually but cordially.) Yet, context implies the former—see 18:32 that God could not find 10 righteous people in the entire city before this even and then also 19:8 as Lot's unfortunate response offering his daughters instead of the male guests; and the fact his life was threatened in 19:9. Further, if Lot was responsible for the sin of inhospitality then why was his life spared while the others judged? And why was the entire city destroyed for a sin in which they had no part?

Leviticus 18:22/20:13 “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination....If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.”

Romans 1:26-27 “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Timothy 1:9-10 “understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine”

Jude 1:7 “just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.”

Further, in the Gospels, Jesus implicitly condemns homosexuality in his affirmation of the creation (Genesis) design. See Matthew 19:4-6;

Cultural Discussions

Does same-sex marriage really affect society or even Christians?

The short answer is yes. Accepting such a re-definition of marriage will radically alter how society views marriage and the expectations placed upon Christians and their marriages. To illustrate: “If the definition of a Ph.D in History were altered to include anyone who watched a documentary on the History Channel, that affects those with a Ph.D in History, even though nothing has been done to their degree specifically.” (J.D. Greear) Further, even private business owners are being impacted for their religious views: photographers, cake bakers, rental shops, etc. For example see Al Mohler's article, “It is the Price of Citizenship?” - An Elegy for Religious Liberty in America.”. Such businesses are not discriminating on the basis of the sexual orientation of the potential client—ex. the baker would cook

and sell the person cake as a customer. However, the business chooses not to serve in a given ceremony that contrasted their religious convictions—ex. the baker would not cook and sell wedding cake for homosexual marriage. Therefore, the redefinition of marriage is creating new boundaries and values upon all society.

More so, numerous secular studies have shown that no nation or society has been able to flourish after 3 generations once “strict marital monogamy” was abandoned as the standard (Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, pp.216-217).

Is homosexuality a civil rights issue?

States regulate marriage in multiple ways: age limits, exclusion of marrying blood relatives and first cousins; exclusion of marrying multiple partners along with exclusion of marrying non-human partners. Further, some states even restrict marriage of people suffering from various venereal diseases. Therefore, homosexuals are not the only people to be excluded from the right to marriage. This does not mean each of these scenarios are equivalent but simply illustrating that marriage has specific regulation and definition for good reason. If the government must redefine and recognize marriage based on the sole basis of individualism, then upon what criteria does it end? Can a person marry multiple partners because they are all in love? Can an adult romance and marry a minor because of personal preference? Can you discern the progression of such a radical redefinition of a sacred institution?

Is homosexuality a genetic predisposition?

While there is no science to prove this, even if it could it would still not make it morally acceptable. A genetic predisposition toward an action can never be the proper basis for legitimizing such a behavior. To give but one example: a male with a genetic glandular condition resulting in the production of increased testosterone and thus a higher than normal sex drive, could not appeal to his genetic condition to validate the morality of rape, incest or pedophilia.

People may experience same-sex attraction at varying levels or have a same-sex orientation (predominant attraction) without having a gay or lesbian identity (adoption of lifestyle and moral acceptance of behavior). In other words, a person may have an attraction or even an orientation toward homosexuality but not act on it.

What is the church’s responsibility to homosexuals?

Christians must love homosexuals more than homosexuals love homosexuality. Jesus’ gospel to transform sinners and the Great Commission remind us to love all sinners alike. No one is beyond the grace and salvation of God. A church that holds signs of hatred or instigates hostility is far removed from the God who sent His only Son to die on a cross to rescue sinners.

Christians must speak the truth in love. The secular option of tolerance equates personhood with lifestyle practices and mandates full acceptance of behaviors/views. The proposed secular option of intolerance equates disagreement with discrimination and is viewed as prejudice rather than principled. But Christians must speak of a third option—speaking the truth in love; differentiating personhood with practice, understanding disagreement does not negate compassion. This is the biblical option and the Christian responsibility. Jesus did not view sins as contagious but instead sought to relate to people where they were and allow them to grow toward an eventual decision toward righteousness. This option must come to the forefront if there is to be a gospel revival among the homosexual community and among secular society.

Al Mohler says, “As Christians, we are charged with the difficult task of compassionate truth-telling... [it] requires the church to speak from its deepest convictions while demonstrating the love of Christ... Christians must resist the temptation to speak the truth in a manner that falls short of the good, the beautiful and the true. We betray the truth when we speak of it with an ugly spirit, or attach it to base arguments or mean-spirited impulses.”

Christians must also recognize the secular world does not recognize the authority and relevance of divine revelation in Scripture. The defense of heterosexual marriage must indeed start with the God-ordained order and point people to His goodness and grace. However, Christians must also learn ways to communicate and contextualize these truths to unbelievers so they can see God’s design. (Sex and the Supremacy of Christ, ed. John Piper. Chapter 5, p.108, Al Mohler “Homosexual Marriage as a Challenge to the Church: Biblical and Cultural Reflections”).

In the end, God has not called the Church to win arguments or control the government but to win souls and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. We could potentially win the war politically, culturally, legally, sociologically and constitutionally but still lose the war spiritually and theologically.

Christ and the gospel must be our focus.

Do we want homosexuals to find heterosexuality? Yes but merely becoming heterosexual is not the same thing as salvation. We also want liars to be truth-tellers, adulterers to be faithful spouses, greedy to be generous, gluttons to learn discipline, prideful to be humble.

Homosexuality is not the central emphasis in Scripture or with Jesus. Both address the topic but in such that it’s only part of our overall identity.

Such transformation of a lifestyle must go beyond moral and external to internal heart change – becoming a new creation, born anew by the gospel.

External behavioral change only produces religious nuts

Internal heart change produces spiritual fruit

The gospel is our only hope. The gospel has the power over EVERY sin. We must speak the beautiful truth that Jesus can cleanse, sanctify and justify every sinner

“Such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11)

“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit.” Galatians 5:24-25

NOTES

FAMILY MATTERS: 21ST CENTURY FAMILIES

Singleness, Widows, Abortion, Adoption and Blended Families

Singleness & Widows

Jesus' example

Isaiah 53:8, 10, 54:1, 3, 5 “By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people... Yet... he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand... Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married, says the Lord... your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities... For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.”

Eunuchs

Isaiah 56:4-5 “For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.”

Matthew 19:12 “For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.”

Matthew 22:30 “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”

Paul's example

1 Corinthians 7:8, 32 “To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single... I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.”

John Stott “Apart from sexual temptation, the greatest danger which I think we face [as singles] is self-centeredness. We may live alone and have total freedom to plan our own schedule, with nobody else to modify it or even give us advice. If we are not careful, we may find the whole world revolving around ourselves.”

John Piper “Today singleness is cherished by many because it brings maximum freedom for self-realization. You pull your own strings. No one cramps your style. But Paul cherished his singleness because it put him utterly at the disposal of the Lord Jesus... The contemporary mood promotes singleness (but not chastity) because it frees from slavery. Paul promotes singleness (and chastity) because it frees from slavery—namely slavery to Christ.”

Biblically, it seems marriage is expected and singleness is exceptional (a unique calling and gifting of God—I Cor 7:7). Marriage exemplifies the gospel through Christ’s sacrificial love and submission to the Father. Likewise, singleness exemplifies the gospel through Christ’s example of focused devotion and full identity with the Father (cf. Hebrews 13:4-6).

How do you know if you have the gift of singleness? This is not some unwanted gift that God spites people with. If you are single, then you have the gift for that season of your life. God may or may not change this season of your life, but your calling is the same. Your calling is to learn the example of Christ’s focused devotion and finding contentment with your identity in God alone (cf. Philippians 4:12-13).

Widows

Psalm 68:5-6 “[God is] Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitary in a home”

Psalm 146:9 “The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless”

Luke 7:13 “And when the Lord saw her [a widow], he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’”

Care and ministry for widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16)

Abortion

- In US, 45+million abortions since 1973; 1.4 million every year; 3000 every day; 1 every 20 seconds

- In world, 46 million abortions occur every year; with almost one every second

Psalm 139:13-14 “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

- Learn the facts.

- Examine the Scriptures.

(cf. Job 10:8-13, 31:15; Jeremiah 1:5; John 9:1-3; Psalm 22:9-10, 139:13-16; Galatians 1:15; Isaiah 49:1)

- See the pictures. We become marked by the atrocity to make a mark for action.

Sympathize with the victims of abortion.

Affirm pro-life causes, pregnancy care ministries and abortion alternatives.

Birth Control (Mark Liederbach in God, Marriage and Family. P.141)

Acceptable	Unacceptable	Needs Consideration
General Principle: Methods that are contraceptive in nature; i.e., exclusively prohibit conception	General Principle: All forms of induced abortion	General Principle: Methods requiring special mention and extra care [theologically and pastorally]
Abstinence	Abortion	Sterilization (vasectomy, tubal occlusion)
Rhythm or calendar method	IUD	"The Pill" and its many applications (combined and progestin-only contraceptives)
"Barrier Methods" (diaphragm, cervical cap, condoms, spermicides)	RU-486 ("morning after pill")	Issues involved: treatment of body as temple of Holy Spirit (sterilization), serious questions regarding the sanctity of life ("the pill")

Adoption

- Over 140 million orphans in world, whom each have a name, a face and a need to know the gospel through a loving family. Adoption becomes a picture of the gospel for what God has done to rescue His children.

Psalm 27:10 "For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in."

Galatians 4:4-5 "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

James 1:27 "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

Blended Families

God's ideal for marriage is covenant & lifelong.

Genesis 2:24 "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Divorce has a negative impact: God's covenant reputation, treachery against spouse, hurt offspring
Malachi 2:13-16 "And this is another thing you do: you cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because He no longer respects your offerings or receives gladly from your hands. Yet you ask, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have acted treacherously against her, though she was your marriage partner and your wife by covenant. Didn't the One make with a remnant of His life-breath? And what does the One seek? A godly offspring. So watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously against the wife of your youth. "If he hates and divorces [his wife]," says the LORD God of Israel, "he covers his garment with injustice," says the LORD of Hosts. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously."

Divorce should not be actively pursued though is permissible: grounds of adultery or if one spouse is unbelieving and separates (abandonment). Remarriage is biblically permissible only if there were biblical grounds for the divorce.

Matthew 5:32, 19:9 “But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery... And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

1 Corinthians 7:10-15 “I command the married—not I, but the Lord—a wife is not to leave her husband. But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband—and a husband is not to leave his wife. But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she is willing to live with him, he must not leave her. Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband, and he is willing to live with her, she must not leave her husband. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the Christian husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to peace. For you, wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Or you, husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

If you are divorced for a biblical reason then know God can restore your relationship, either with previous spouse or with a new one in Christian marriage.

If you are divorced for an unbiblical reason then know God desires your repentance and provides forgiveness.

If you are divorced for an unbiblical reason and re-married then know God desires your repentance and provides forgiveness from that and desires you to reflect the gospel in your current marriage.

Romans 12:9-13 “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”

1 Corinthians 12:26 “If one member [of the body] suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”

Galatians 6:10 “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”

1 Timothy 5:8 “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

Blended families come in various shapes and sizes. The church is often uncertain how best to minister; sometimes due to ignorance and sometimes due to apathy and neither are excusable. Essentially, single parents, children of divorce or deceased parents are not a ministry project but a people to love like every other person. These relationships will often require more time, increased tension and emotion, greater flexibility and support, yet the church has no greater calling to display the hope and healing of the gospel to broken situations.

MORE Q&A

How should the church address & lead positive activism to overcome “evil days” (i.e. removing God from society, abortion, no absolutes, erosion of family unit, redefining traditional marriage)?

Christians must respect the government (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-25)

Christians must glorify God (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17; Luke 20:25)

Be a prophetic voice calling for righteousness

Be a priestly heart caring for social problems

Be a kingly organizer within the governmental system (voting, awareness & involved in politics, etc.)

Church’s mission focus is proclaiming the gospel & making disciples, which means equipping its members with the character, convictions (worldview) and competencies to carry out God’s kingdom agenda on the earth.

How can families and the church help young people gain a greater sense of respect for themselves, others and involvement in the world around them?

Model the behavior they want emulated

Mentor young people. This means investment not just volunteering or worse passing the role off to someone else.

Pray for them

Love and Lead them in the Word

Play with them – relationships require built trust

What should families do when there is alcohol & drug use in the home?

Matthew 18:15-20

Speak up (one on one)

Do what you can to remove the temptations

Express love

Point out the seriousness & dangers of behavior

Stand up (intervention of others)

Counselors who counsel with the Scripture & Christian Community/
Accountability

Stauros

Celebrate Recovery

Step back (allow consequences; change in the relationship but not necessarily change the relationship)

The pain & fear of staying the same must become greater than the pain & fear of changing.

What are some Biblical & practical helps for families dealing with financial crisis (personally & collectively)?

Change view from ownership to stewardship (Psalm 24:1; Matthew 25:14-30)

Budget

Dave Ramsey – Financial Peace University

What should I do if my children are grown and I missed opportunities to shepherd their hearts to Christ?

Trust God loves your children more than you do and is a greater parent-Father than your shortcomings.

Repent and ask forgiveness from your children. After they wake up from fainting they will appreciate (somewhat) your intention.

Never stop parenting (Ephesians 6:1-4) though the relationship changes

0-3	Foundations: provision, care, nurture
1-3; 4-5; 6-13; 13-18	Formations: instruction, guidance, correction
18+	Freedom: release, allow success & failure (avoid boomerang, adultolescence)
20's+	Follow-up: advise, counsel, friend

What biblical help do you have for blended families – and especially single mom's?

Church is an extended family that can provide role models and surrogate parenthood roles.

Ephesians 2:19 "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God"

NOTES

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

General

Harvey, Dave. When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage.
Köstenberger, Andreas. God, Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation
Platt, David. Marriage, Family, Sex and The Gospel. Secret Church Study Guide. Disciple-Making International (www.disciplemakingintl.org)

Abortion or Adoption

Alcorn, Randy. Why Pro-Life?
Klusendorf, Scott. The Case for Life: Equipping Christians to Engage the Culture
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Other Helps

www.fltoday.org

www.family.org

www.heritagebuilders.com

www.homeword.com

www.cbmw.org