



# MARRIAGE & FAMILY

**God's Good Plan**

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**Session 1**

# **BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS**



# GOD'S ORIGINAL DESIGN

- **Before the Fall, it can be safely assumed that being single was “not good” in that it was not good that man should be alone.**
- **Humankind was also commanded to be fruitful and to multiply. Simply, that if the Fall did not take place all of humankind would have paired off in a one man/one woman relationship (been married) and would have born children. (Genesis 1:28; 2:18)**



- **A man was to “leave” his parents and join with his wife**
- **“Leaving” in this context was more in terms of becoming less dependent upon his parents as his wife/children would become a new priority for care and provision.**
- **He would, however, still be expected to honour his parents (Matthew 15:1-9). This understanding is very different than that of our more modern, individualistic understanding.**



- **Social scientists consistently acknowledge over and over how the family is the building block of society – as it is often stated, “so goes the family, so goes society”.**
- **Originally, “family” was not the relatively recent definition of family as that of the “nuclear” family consisting of only parents and children; but of the historical family that today is often called the “extended” family consisting of grandparents, grandchildren, uncles and aunts, cousins and in-laws.**
- **It is this larger family that has always been the foundation of society in that merely a “nuclear” family could never fulfill all that is required from a supportive network. While the smaller husband-wife-child unit would certainly have particular dynamics as a man and woman would “leave and cleave”, this would not reflect an alienation from the larger family system.**



- **Even the term “nuclear family” only first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1925 and the Merriam-Webster dictionary in 1947.**
- **It can be noted that the rise of the notion of the nuclear family has paralleled the rise of industrialization, urbanization and individualism, particularly in the West, where people would leave extended family systems of more rural and small-town communities as a response to the changing economic landscape and vocational opportunities found in cities. Even the norm of the extended family found in cities in earlier times changed significantly with industrialization where work and homelife became increasingly separate worlds.**



# A FALLEN WORLD

- **With the Fall, everything changed. The possibility of singleness as an on-going condition was introduced. Marriage and family life was disrupted (e.g. divorce, dishonour/rebellion to parents, childlessness, etc.).**
- **Within this “fallen” context Jesus’ disciples discuss their discouragement regarding marriage/divorce stating it might be better to stay single.**



- **Regarding reasons for singleness resulting from living in a fallen world, Jesus states those being unsuitable for marriage (e.g. eunuchs) as resulting from 1) Being born unsuitable 2) Being unsuitable because of others/environment 3) Being unsuitable because of the “sake of the kingdom” (Matthew 19:10-13)**





➤ **The “sake of the kingdom” is not to be interpreted as a promotion or encouragement of “celibacy” as a lifestyle (since marriage is God’s original design) but rather as accepting that either marriage may not be the best option for the near future (only temporarily) or that marriage may be less likely (e.g. possibly due to widowhood or divorce) and therefore the single person concentrates their immediate attention to focusing on some particular service to God often not conducive to being married.**



➤ **Jesus states that everyone may not be able to receive this. The apostle Paul, although generally promoting marriage (I Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5:22-33; I Timothy 5:14) states that singleness might at times be a preferable state for certain circumstances, but one would need to be especially gifted. Even so, he especially warns against those who would seek to forbid marriage (I Timothy 4:3).**



# **ORIGINALLY MARRIAGE WAS SOLELY A MATTER BETWEEN FAMILIES**

- **“God settles the solitary in a home” (Ps. 68:6) expresses the importance of family and community life in the OT according to God’s perspective. Since the earliest recoded history, marriage among God’s people was a matter solely between families.**
- **There were no requirements for someone to “officiate” a marriage. Marriage was a matter between the couple and their respective parents/families. A marriage or an intended marriage was to be witnessed and made “public” in the community by a formal “betrothal” or wedding.**



- **In the Early Church, although there were liturgies involved with the Eucharist, Baptism and Confirmation, there was no special liturgy regarding marriage and there was no importance placed on the presence of clergy.**
- **People could simply marry by mutual agreement in the presence of witnesses.**
- **The first detailed record of a Christian wedding in the West dates back only to the 9<sup>th</sup> century and marriage was first recognized as a sacrament at the Council of Verona (AD 1184). Decrees requiring a priest and two witnesses were first laid down during the Council of Trent (AD 1563) and the Catholic Church only allowed marriages to take place inside churches beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.**



- **Marriage, representing both families, stressed the importance of a union in passing down the very essence and testimony of all they would hold dear and for which the two families stood.**
- **Even though the importance of family did not negate the importance of the individual, any honorable individual would define themselves within the context of their family.**
- **Any two individuals contemplating marriage would never conceive of embarking on such a course without the full involvement of family from the very beginning of the relationship and throughout the course of their lives.**



- **As previously stated, adults “leaving and cleaving” in establishing themselves as a separate unit was never to be understood as necessarily moving any great distance geographically as the larger family system was both an economic and social community.**
- **The marital couple would continue to honor their parents by living their lives in obedience to the beliefs and values to which their parents raised them and passing these on to their children.**
- **The apostle Paul even depicted an “evil generation” as comprising adults who were “disobedient to parents” (Romans 1:30; II Timothy 3:2). Indeed, it was the larger family system that was to be the primary instrument in preserving the Christian faith as commonly shared with the larger Christian community, Christ’s Church.**





# Summary: Biblical Call To Marriage and Family





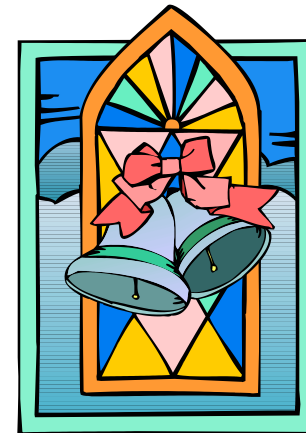
# **Marriage and Family: Necessary as God's Idea**

## **Design of Creation (Genesis 1-2)**



# **Marriage: Necessary as God's Idea**

**Reflects Christ and His Church  
(Ephesians 5:22-33)**



**Marriage: Necessary as God's Idea  
To Prevent Immorality  
(I Corinthians 7:1-7)**



# Marriage Commended

**Proverbs 5:18-20 - rejoice with wife of youth,  
let her breasts satisfy, ever captivated by her  
love**



# Marriage Commended

**Proverbs 18:22 – finds wife, finds good thing**



# Marriage Commended

**Hebrews 13:4 – marriage honored**



# Marriage Commended

**I Timothy 4:3 – forbidding to marry  
condemned**



# Marriage and Family Perspective

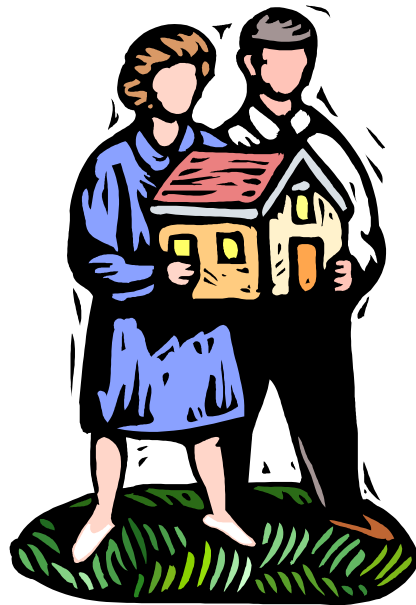
**Psalm 127: 1 – unless the Lord builds  
the house, labor is in vain**





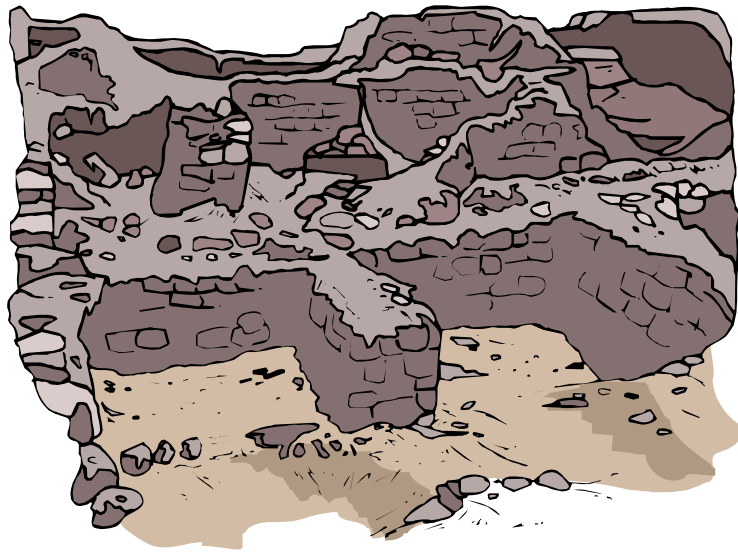
# Marriage and Family Perspective

**Proverbs 14:1 – a wise woman builds her house**



# Marriage and Family Perspective

**Proverbs 24: 27 – prepare the field  
before, afterward build the house**



# MARRIAGE & FAMILY ARE CENTRAL TO GOD'S PLAN

- **The family is God's original community in which He carries out His purposes (Genesis 1 & 2)**
- **The family is the primary means of blessing and perpetuating the Faith to future generations (Gen. 17: 7; Deut. 6: 6-9)**
- **Family relations are central to God's law (Ten Commandments – Ex. 20: 1-17; Deut. 5: 6-21)**

