
Article XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

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.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15, 17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8, 14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

(Sermon Title)

Ephesians 5:21 – 6:4

I love my family. Even with the joys and the blessings of it, I find family to be, doing family right, doing family God's way, one of the most challenging things on earth. That is our challenge today. I want this to be somewhat of an academic exercise as we learn

about the Baptist Faith and Message, but I want us to do family better, to learn something that helps us in practice.

Ephesians 5 is one of the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture. Paul wrote about church and about family. In Ephesians 5, Paul discussed God's design for the family and its connection with Jesus and the church. The Lord wants us to understand, and he also wants us to do something with it. Today in our society there is a great need for us as ministers, for those of us who call ourselves followers of Jesus, to understand what Paul wrote about and put it into practice. We need to understand and practice family according to God's design, God's plan. When we do that it will help us as we relate properly to Jesus and as we seek to help others do the same. We have to start with ourselves; it must start with us and our families. Let us address some elements of family.

First, let us think about the conception of the family. Conception --- just like God causes the conception of a child to take place in the mother's womb. According to Genesis 1 and 2, the family is God's idea. It is God's work. God has done a work to start the family, that the family would be conceived. The Baptist Faith and Message article reads in its first line, "God has ordained the family." The family is God's idea and His work. The Baptist Faith and Message also reads, "Family is the foundational institution of human society." The foundational, the basic institution of society! Two weeks ago when I preached about the church we talked about the fact that, even though the physical manifestation started somewhere in the book of Acts, Caesarea Philippi, or at Pentecost, the idea of church started all the way back in eternity with God, with God planning that as His design. We do not have a passage that helps us here

about family, but I expect the same is true about family. Even in its physical manifestation family comes before the church with God starting family, Genesis 1 and 2. That ought to remind us of its importance and value. While we are thinking about conception, let's emphasize the position of the Baptist Faith and Message on an important subject. The writers of the article described children this way, "Children, from the moment of conception." Praise God that the Baptist Faith and Message statement is pro-life! Thank the Lord that our denomination is pro-life. You ought to be pro-life. Thoroughly, completely, solidly pro-life! That is a basis for an understanding about family.

Now let us turn our attention to the composition of the family. Here, we want to go in three different directions. First, we need to think about the composition of the family as related to marriage. In our passage, Ephesians 5:22, 25, and 31, Paul very clearly and simply described the composition of marriage. He referred either about a man and a woman or about a husband and a wife. Say that with me -- man and woman, husband and wife! Now, what is confusing about that? Simple! It is God's design, God's plan. You need to understand there are those in our society, secularists, feminists and others, who want to redefine marriage. Two men, two women, a group, and heaven knows what else. If we are going to be God's people, His ministers, we must hold our ground, lovingly, boldly, and courageously hold our ground about what God's design is for the composition of marriage. One man and one woman, that is God's design! Let's stick with His plan; let's do what God says to do.

We also need to think here about the family unit itself. The Baptist Faith and Message reads that the family is made up "of persons related to one another by

marriage, blood, or adoption.” First, marriage, again the man and the woman; by blood, the children that come from the union of that man and woman, who are produced by them, the blood offspring of that man and woman. I am not sure if the writers of this statement intended it, but certainly a family has to do also with parents and others, blood kin, that are brought in under the same roof to help and minister to them. Then, the word adoption. Praise God for adoption! What a beautiful picture it is of what God has done for us through Christ, to adopt us as sinners into His body. Praise God for those who adopt the many, many hurting children across our world and who provide a home and a family for them.

The third direction in the composition of the family is children. The Baptist Faith and Message statement reads, “from the moment of conception.” At that very instant what do they become? A part of family, a part of the family that God has provided! Again, we must affirm and practice God’s definition of the composition of the family. We have to recognize, if you stay in ministry, if you follow Jesus, you are going to face much opposition in the days ahead about the composition of family, what it is about, God’s design, God’s plan. With society, churches, counseling, and every other way, we need to understand God’s composition and God’s definition of family and work toward that wonderful goal.

The third element about the family that we want to address today is the equality of the family. In the Ephesians passage, Paul affirmed the value and importance of every person and every family member. The Baptist Faith and Message also affirms the value and importance of every person. In fact it reads, “The husband and wife are of equal worth before God.” In Ephesians 5:21, both are told to submit to one another in

the Lord. Even in this statement, have we mentioned this before, “children, from the moment of conception.” Have we said anything about that already? Even the unborn are of equal worth before God, of value and of importance. God’s design, God’s way is that every person is of equal value before God. This is supported throughout all of the New Testament. Well again, we have to recognize that the world does not see it that way, and the world accuses us, as Christians, and the Bible, as being degrading or devaluing particularly of women. Imagine that! Well, as you examine that issue and compare our record to other religions, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, where do we stand? We have a wonderful record, do we not? A wonderful record as compared to other religions and compared to other cultures that virtually enslave the woman! The feminist movement of today wants to critique us greatly that the Bible position and the Christian position on woman is a degrading position. Well, if properly understood, their position enslaves people. The Scripture, God’s design, God’s way is the most liberating, the most freedom granting of any system on earth. To declare the equality, the value, the importance of every person, man, woman, child, all of equal importance and all of equal value before God is God’s way.

The discussion about the equality of the family leads us directly into an emphasis about the headship of the family. In thinking about headship, we need to go again in two different directions. First, we want to affirm that Jesus is the head of the family. This passage and the Baptist Faith and Message both affirm the lordship or the headship of Jesus over every person, every institution, family, and church. Just like the church does not function properly unless every part of it is under the headship of Jesus,

neither does the family. The family must be under the lordship or headship of Jesus, and each member under His headship as well for it to function properly.

Let's also emphasize here the husband as the head of the family. In Ephesians 5:22, Paul wrote, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." A direct command, submit! The qualification or guideline there is to do that just like you do so to the Lord. Ephesians 5:24, "as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands," again affirming the headship of the family as the husband. Verse twenty-five reads, "Husbands, love your wives," just like Christ loved the church. Let's make a clarification here. Paul is writing to a group -- husbands, plural, love your wives, plural. He is not endorsing plural marriage. He is not writing about a Warren Jeffs or Fundamentalist LDS situation. He is writing to a group. "Husband, love your wife," he would say to us in the singular. As wives submit husbands are to love and serve the wife as Christ has loved and served the church. The Baptist Faith and Message uses a term here that we often use about leadership in churches, that the husband is to provide servant leadership. What does that mean? He is to lead by being a servant, to love so much, to serve so much that he has the right, the respect, and the trust to lead because he is a servant, not to domineer the wife's submission, not to take advantage of the wife's submission, but to be a servant leader for the family. The Baptist Faith and Message in another sentence reads that the husband "has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family." Guys, even though we like to emphasize the woman's part to submit, where is the greater responsibility? It is on us. Guys, are you man enough to serve that woman? Are you man enough to love her in such a way that you become her servant? Only then can you be the head of the house!

Only then can you provide servant leadership as Paul described and as Jesus want us to have.

The Baptist Faith and Message was originally written in 1925, revised in 1963, and revised again in 2000. The statement on the family was added in 1998, because of the need for clarity in our society at that point about our position on the family. Those of you who are old enough to remember know that when we adopted this statement about family we created quit a stir. We created an uproar. The media, the secularists, the feminists, they all laughed at us. They scolded us. They thought we were horrible for the wording of this statement. Two thoughts here. One is that they are never going to understand it, so we are going to have to do the right thing anyway. The other side of that is that they were scolding us and making fun of us about a misunderstanding of the statement. All they wanted to focus on was that brief sentence about the “wife is to submit herself graciously to her husband.” They did not understand the whole context. The wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of a husband who is loving and serving just like Jesus did for the church. What did Jesus do for the church? He laid down His life for the church’s good, willing to do whatever He could, laying down His life on a cross for our good and for our sin to make us right with God. The husband is to do the same type of thing. Even a team of two must have a leader. God’s design for the marriage is for the husband to be that leader.

Let us turn our attention now to the purpose of the family. The passage and the Baptist Faith and Message statement help us by pointing us to God’s purposes for the family. We will address five here. Obviously there are others, but I think these are some of the more important ones, the purposes of the family. First would be to model

the way God relates to His people and how Christ relates to the church. In verse twenty-five, Paul wrote, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” Verse thirty-two, “This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.” God is giving us a model, an example of how He works with His people and how Christ works with His church. The model goes both ways. The pattern of family and the pattern of husband and wife is to follow that pattern, but then in the church we are to see the family as a pattern for the way God wants the church to function as well. So, it is a model for us helping us relate properly to Jesus and to relate properly to the church.

A second purpose is companionship for man and for woman. The Baptist Faith and Message reads this way, “to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship.” Except for a few ordained for singleness according to Jesus and Paul in 1 Corinthians, God wants every man and every woman to have a soul mate, that person, that helper that becomes one flesh with them. What God wants for us is better than what eharmony.com can provide. God wants us to have that person, absolute spiritual companionship, a best friend.

Somebody has said that dog is man’s best friend. In some ways that’s true. I read recently how you could test that theory. Guys, you are supposed to grab your dog and your wife at the same time, throw them into the trunk of your car, and slam the lid. Wait one hour and go back and open the lid. Which one will be the happier one to see you? Now guys, if you are dumb enough to do that, you had better make sure you have a good dog and a good dog house so that you will have at least one friend and a place

to sleep. No, dog is not man's best friend according to God's design. God has designed it so that in a marriage the husband and wife become one flesh, a fulfilling companionship of being on the same page spiritually. As my wife likes to say, "being together about things," thinking the same way, understanding things the same way, life going in the same direction. God's plan, and what a wonderful plan it is!

Companionship is God's purpose for marriage.

The third is sexual expression and intimacy. The Baptist Faith and Message reads that marriage is, "the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards." We know this, but let's make it clear. God's standard, God's place, God's channel for sexual expression is for one man and one woman within marriage. It always has been and always will be. Within the relationship of husband and wife, sex is beautiful, holy, and wonderful. Anything outside of that, any sexual expression outside of that relationship, is unholy, sinful. We must understand that and practice God's way. Again, let's understand that the world is at work to redefine sexual intimacy, to redefine it in terms of partners, to redefine it in terms of timing, to redefine it in terms of purpose. We must lovingly, boldly, and courageously hold our ground. Live, teach, and serve according to God's design.

Let's think personally here for a moment. Many of you are single, a word for you. Be patient! Get on God's design with this. It is worth the wait. There are a lot of blessings when you allow the sexual expression of intimacy, the sexual expression of your life to be within God's design. Just be patient! Do it the way God would have you to do it. Some of you are married. What should I say to you? Enjoy your spouse in the Lord! Enjoy the beauty and the adventure of sexual intimacy and expression within that

beautiful relationship that God has provided you. Sexual expression and intimacy is one of the purposes of marriage and family.

A fourth purpose is procreation, the producing of children to populate the earth. In Genesis, Adam and Eve were told to be fruitful and multiply. The Baptist Faith and Message reads, “to provide for the man and the woman in marriage . . . the means for procreation of the human race.” Again the Baptist Faith and Message reads, “Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord.” Producing godly offspring is a purpose of marriage.

A fifth purpose is the nurture of family and children, a place and a platform for the nurturing, the building up of people and family. Is it any wonder that our society is in such a mess today because of the breakdown of family? Oh, we have lots of work to do. We need to model family properly, to teach it properly in our churches and other settings, and to disciple others to live out family. The best place of discipling, the best place of helping others to become those who are nurtured in the Lord, who are mature and disciplined in the Lord, is through the family relationship. Ephesians 6:1-4 is about children. Children are commanded to obey their parents. Do you ever get too old to obey your parents? Children are also instructed here to honor their father and mother. Does the passage offer an age limit on that command? I do not think so! We have a lot of work to do to continue honoring our father and mother throughout their lives, whatever our age is. There is also a command here for fathers. Fathers are to take the lead, to be the leader in instructing and nurturing the children, and to do that without frustrating them. How important the mom is in the nurture and instructing the children! However, in this passage, fathers, this is part of being the servant leadership in the

home. Until you are ready to do this, do not have children. Wait to have children until you are ready to do it God's way. God calls us to use the home as a place and a platform for the nurture of the family and for the children. Five wonderful purposes of the family!

What a wonderful God we serve! His design, His plan is so good, so perfect, and so wonderful! Let's seek to live in His design. Let's teach others His design. Let's work with churches about His design. I believe there will be blessings for us, all the way from the single person through leadership in churches, if we will simply seek to follow God's plan and God's design.

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ⁱR. Logan *Gladness and Singleness of Heart: My Life with My Lord* (Philadelphia, PN: Xlibris Corporation, 2006), 17-18.

ⁱⁱThe Greek verb in 1 John 4:3 is a perfect tense verb. The perfect tense indicates the continuance of completed action. become flesh (completed action) and the action of incarnation continues to the time at which John wrote.

ⁱⁱⁱHofmannite Christology is named for Anabaptist leader Melchoir Hoffman (1496-1544). This type of Christology shares ideas about the virginal conception similar to valentines Gnosticism.