



## Counter Culture Family

Today we are facing the redefinition of the family of epic proportions. We observe that more individuals, both those that profess to be Christian and those that do not, choose to forsake the Biblical definition of family and embrace a worldly definition. The sad reality is that today the redefinition of the family is no longer a matter of opinion rather it has become political policy in our nation. Consider the following observations,

This redefinition was made official by the U.S. Government on June 26th, 2015. This day stands as a significant milestone in the American history because this is the day that the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court, redefined family in terms of legalizing homosexual marriage.

- No human court has the authority to redefine marriage, and the verdict yesterday does not change the God ordained reality of marriage. God was not defeated in this ruling, and every marriage will be judged according to biblical grounds on the last day. Nothing will prevail against Him (Proverbs 21:30) and nothing will thwart the advance of His Kingdom (Dan 4:35).
- This ruling proves that we are clearly in the minority, and a people set apart (1 Peter 2:9-11; Titus 2:14). John MacArthur once wrote in his book, **"Why Government Can't Save You"** that the standards that shaped Western culture and American society have given way to practical atheism and moral relativism. This decision has simply accelerated the rate of decline. A country will not rise above the morality of its citizens, and the majority of Americans don't have a biblical worldview.
- Marriage is not the ultimate battleground, and our enemies are not the men and women who seek to destroy it (2 Corinthians 10:4). The battleground is the Gospel. Be careful not to replace patience, love, and prayer with bitterness, hatred, and politics. As you carefully guide your flock around the dangerous pitfalls ahead, remind them of the indomitable power of forgiveness through the cross of Christ.

### QUESTIONS

How is the definition of "family" being changed today?

Describe three elements of a Biblical definition of "family."

What is the danger of redefining "family" in any culture?

As a nation begins redefining family then disastrous results begin consuming the society, taking it farther from the centrality of the Lordship of Christ, sovereignty of God, and true definition of family. The results range from ...

- More confusion regarding identity and sexuality
- Increased pursuit of personal pleasure and gain rather than the welfare of others
- Rejection of absolute standards of morality
- Rejection of the Word of God
- Increased disobedience to the Lord.
- Rejection of eternal salvation.

The redefinition of family leads to the destruction of a society even though critics may disagree; history provides ample evidence pointing to this fact. Today, there are three basic approaches to family values.

### Model #1 – Default Family Approach

This is what George Barna termed "the path of least resistance." In this approach, parents do whatever comes naturally to the parent, as influenced by cultural norms and traditions. The objective is to keep everyone - parent, child, and others - as happy as possible, without having the process of parenting dominate other important or prioritized aspects of the parent's life.<sup>1</sup>

### Model #2 – Trial and Error Family Approach

This approach is based on the notion that every parent is an amateur at raising children, there are no absolute guidelines to follow, and that the best that parents can do is to experiment, observe outcomes, and improve based upon their successes and failures in child rearing. In this incremental approach, the goals of parenting are to continually improve and to perform better than most other parents.<sup>2</sup>

### Model #3 – Biblical Family Approach

This is the only successful strategy for family. The institution of marriage and family was originated by God and ordained by Him alone. This model is a success because it provides the only basis for God's blessing to be upon your family and marriage.

#### QUESTIONS

Compare and contrast the three models regarding the definition of family.

Which model is most popular today?

Give three examples of how you can teach the "Biblical Model" to the next generation.

The redefinition of the family unit should not come as a surprise to us due to three main reasons. First, we observe less value placed on marriage in our society. Second, we observe an increase in the number of individuals that declare that cohabitation is completely acceptable. Finally, we observe an increase in premarital sex without any intention of getting married.

The Pew Research Study in 2010 identified that nearly four-in-ten survey respondents (39%) say that it is; in 1978 when Time magazine posed this question to registered voters, just 28% agreed. Those most likely to agree include those who are a part of the phenomenon (62% of cohabiting parents) as well as those most likely to be troubled by it (42% of self-described conservatives).<sup>3</sup>

TIME Magazine wrote an article on November 29, 2010 with the title, "Who Needs Marriage?" in which the author summarized the drifting of American values regarding family and marriage as she states, "What we have found is that marriage, whatever its social, spiritual, or symbolic appeal, is in purely practical terms just not as necessary as it used to be."<sup>4</sup>

Only 46% of our young people state that their religious faith is very important in their lives.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> George Barna, "Research Shows Parenting Approach Determines Whether Children Become Devoted Christians." April 09, 2007. Downloaded

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center, "The Decline of Marriage and Rise of New Families" (November 18, 2010). Downloaded from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/the-decline-of-marriage-and-rise-of-new-families/>

<sup>4</sup> Belinda Luscombe, "Who Needs Marriage? A Changing Institution" (Time Magazine: November 18, 2010)

<sup>5</sup> George Barna, "Revolutionary Parenting." (Carol Stream: Tyndale Publishers, 2007), 9.

Most of our children are biblically illiterate...Their ignorance of Bible teachings corresponds to the fact that only 36% of our adolescents fully believe that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches.<sup>6</sup>

**Why does this redefinition matter to Christians today?** It is imperative that Christians understand that our nation has been given the same warning as other nations in Scripture,

**Isaiah 5:20** – Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

We understand that recovering the Biblical family model impacts the culture in a positive manner and has the ability to redefine absolute morality as a standard and restore the country. The question remains, **How do we accomplish this task?** The answer is found in a quick overview of Ephesians 5:22-6:4,

**Ephesians 5:22-6:4** – <sup>22</sup>Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup>In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup>because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup>“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup>This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

<sup>6:1</sup>Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup>“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” <sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

## Three Central Truths About the Biblical Family

On September 11, 2013 a study was released that observed, “The American modern family no longer resembles the old vision of a 'traditional family,' says a new study from Ohio State University; marriages are in decline, divorces on the rise, and adult kids are returning home bringing some big shifts in the makeup of US households.”

Today, we need to boldly declare that there is a need for our country to return back to God’s design for the family; which starts with marriage between one man and one woman. God’s design is clearly laid out in Ephesians 5.

### Truth #1 – A Godly Wife is the Perfect Helpmate for a Godly Husband

The first truth that we examine is found in verses 22-24 as it describes the role of a wife, a female, in the traditional family.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 8.

**Ephesians 5:22-24** – <sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Please understand that God's plan for the family is sometimes offensive even to some in the church because the church has been so engulfed in, identified with, and victimized by worldly standards, God's standards seem out-of-date, irrelevant, and offensive to modern mentalities. His way is so high and so contrary to the way of the world that it is incomprehensible to many in and out of the church.

Yet the New Testament calls us to another dimension of existence, a new way of thinking, acting, and living. To "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which [we] have been called ... and [to] put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:1, 24)

#### QUESTIONS

Describe the modern definition of the role of a wife in marriage.

How does this compare with the Biblical definition?

### Matter

- There Greek term **Wives** is not qualified, and therefore applies to every Christian wife, regardless of her social standing, education, intelligence, spiritual maturity or giftedness, age, experience, or any other consideration. Nor is it qualified by her husband's intelligence, character, attitude, spiritual condition, or any other consideration. Paul says categorically to *all* believing wives: **submit to your own husbands.**

As indicated by italics in most translations, **submit** is not in the original text, but the meaning is carried over from verse 21. The idea is: "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ [and, as a first example,] **wives, ... to your own husbands.**"

**Submit** – This term means to relinquish one's rights emphasizes the willing submitting of *oneself* God's command is to those who are to submit. That is, the submission is to be a voluntary response to God's will – in this case the wife's **own husband.**

The idea is not that of subservience or servility, but of willingly functioning under the husband's leadership.

### Manner

- The manner or attitude of submission is to be **as to the Lord**. Everything we do in obedience to the Lord should also be done first of all for His glory and to please Him.

### Motive

- The wife's supreme motive for submitting to her husband is the fact that he is her functional head in the family, just **as Christ also is the head of the church** (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; Col. 1:18; and see Eph. 1:22-23). The head gives direction and the body responds. A physical body that does not respond to the direction of the head is crippled, paralyzed, or spastic.

### Model

- Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

## Truth #2 – A Godly Husband Sets the Standard for his Family in Manner, Model, and Motive

The second truth deals with the role of the husband as found in verses 25-33. Jesus Christ is the divine role model for husbands, who should provide for, protect, preserve, love, and lead their wives and families as Christ cares for His church.

**Ephesians 5:25-33** – <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

### QUESTIONS

Describe the modern definition of the role of a husband in marriage.

How does this compare with the Biblical definition?

## Manner – Four Qualities of the Love of a Husband

The command, “**husbands, love your wives**” shows that husbands are to love their wives **just as Christ also loved the church**. Jesus Christ loved the church before He brought the church into existence. He chose and loved His own even “before the foundation of the world” (1:4), because God’s love is eternally present, having no past and no future.

- In this passage Paul mentions four qualities of that divine love that husbands are to exemplify toward their wives.

### Sacrificial Love

and gave Himself up for her. (5:25b)

When Christ came to earth in human form, He knew that He came to be mocked, ridiculed, maligned, rejected, beaten, and crucified. He knew from eternity past what would be demanded of His eternal love if men were to be provided a way of salvation. He gave up His prerogatives as God’s Son, not regarding “equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant. ... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:6-8).

### QUESTION

Describe the different ways in which a husband is to love his wife.

The husband who loves his wife for what she can give him loves as the world loves, not as Christ loves. The husband who loves his wife as Christ loves His church gives everything he has for his wife, including his life if necessary.

- A Christian husband exhibits a Love that does whatever needs to be done and does not count cost or merit. It reaches out and helps, leads, teaches, warns, or encourages. Whatever is needed it gives. Whether its help is received or rejected, appreciated or resented, love continues as long as the need continues.

If a loving husband is willing to sacrifice his life for his wife, he is certainly willing to make lesser sacrifices for her. He puts his own likes, desires, opinions, preferences, and welfare aside if that is required to please her and meet her needs. He dies to self in order to live for his wife, because that is what Christ's kind of love demands. That is his submission.

### ***Purifying Love***

<sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,  
<sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

For husbands to love their wives as Christ loves His church is to love them with a purifying love. Love wants only the best for the one it loves, and it cannot bear for a loved one to be corrupted or misled by anything evil or harmful.

When a husband's love for his wife is like Christ's love for His church, he will continually seek to help purify her from any sort of defilement. He will seek to protect her from the world's contamination and protect her holiness, virtue, and purity in every way. He will never induce her to do that which is wrong or unwise or expose her to that which is less than good.

In ancient Greece, a bride-to-be would be taken down to a river to be bathed and ceremonially cleansed from every defilement of her past life. Whatever her life had been before, it was now symbolically purified and she would enter the marriage without any moral or social blemish – the past was washed away.

In an immeasurably greater way Christ gave Himself up for the church, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. His cleansing of believers is not ceremonial and symbolic, but real and complete.

### ***Caring Love***

<sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. For a husband's love for his wife to be like Christ's love for His Body, the church, it must also be affectionately caring – to the extent that he cares as much for her welfare as he does for the welfare of his own body.

Because, as Christians, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, we should be take proper care of them – giving them the right food, maintaining reasonable strength, getting enough rest, and so on. When our body is healthy we have a sense of well-being; and when a husband meets the needs of his wife – with the same care and concern with which he meets the needs of his own body – he will also have a sense of well-being and pleasure as a by-product of his love.

The husband who loves his wife as Christ loves the church will no more do anything to harm her than he would to harm **his own flesh**. His desire is to nourish and cherish her just as he **nourishes and cherishes** his own body – because that is how **Christ also does the church**.

- To nourish a wife is to provide for her needs, to give that which helps her grow and mature in favor with God and man. To cherish her is to use tender love and physical affection to give her warmth, comfort, protection, and security. Those responsibilities are primarily the husband's, not the wife's. As Christ provides for His church, so the husband provides for his wife and family.

When she needs strength, he gives her strength. When she needs encouragement, he gives her that. And so with every other thing she needs.

## Unbreakable Love

<sup>31</sup> “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

In this direct quotation from Genesis 2:24 Paul emphasized the permanence as well as the unity of marriage. God’s standard for marriage did not change from the time of Adam until the time of Paul, and it has not changed to this day.

- One of the greatest barriers to successful marriage is the failure of one or both partners to **leave ... father and mother**. In marriage, a new family is begun and the relationships of the former families are to be severed as far as authority and responsibilities are concerned. Parents are always to be loved and cared for, but they are no longer to control the lives of their children once they are married.
- **Hold fast** literally means to be glued or cemented together. Husbands and wives are to **leave** their parents and to **cleave (hold fast)** to, be cemented to, each other.

The husband who gives his wife consideration, courtesy, and honor contributes to the beauty and strength of his marriage and gives an invaluable example and legacy to his children.<sup>7</sup>

If the couple attends church once per week, they are more likely to stay married a minimum of 11 years.

If the couple attends church less than once per week, they are likely to stay married approximately 9.8 years.

If the couple never attends church, they are likely to stay married approximately 7.2 years.

## Truth #3 – Godly Children

The final truth that we examine is found in verses 1-4 as we look at the responsibility of children in the family. We have many children today that treat their parents as if they are clueless and lack respect for their authority in the home.

In the United States at least eight million serious assaults are made each year by children on their parents. In recent years, a number of children have been convicted of murdering or hiring the killing of their parents – usually for no greater reason than resentment of parental control or discipline. Children who are incessantly told they can do whatever they wish and can have their own way are children who will soon mock their parents, teachers, moral standards, the law, and society in general. All human relationships obviously grow out of those of children with parents. Children who respect and obey their parents will build a society that is ordered, harmonious, and productive. A generation of undisciplined, disobedient children will produce a society that is chaotic and destructive.<sup>8</sup>

### QUESTIONS

Describe the modern definition of the role of children in marriage.

How does this compare with the Biblical definition?

We observe within Ephesians 6:1-4 that the reason why Christian children want to show respect to Christian parents is due to the fact that it is commanded by the Lord. Read this text one more time,

<sup>7</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 296–304.

<sup>8</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 313.



**Ephesians 6:1-4** – <sup>1</sup>Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup>“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” <sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- **Children** – This term does not refer particularly to young children but to all offspring. Sons and daughters still under their parents’ roof are to **obey** and **honor** them. **Obey** has to do with action, and **honor** has to do with attitude.
- **Obey** – This term literally means “to hear under,” that is, to listen with attentiveness and to respond positively to what is heard. **Children** are to put themselves under the words and authority of their **parents**.
- **In the Lord** refers to pleasing the Lord. Children **obey** their parents as reflective of their obedience to the Lord. **Parents** are to be obeyed and honored because to do so is to obey and honor **the Lord**.

**Colossians 3:20** – “Be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord”

The only exception to that obedience is in the matter of doing what is wrong. Every believer should refuse to do anything that is clearly against God’s will as taught in Scripture. He should say with Peter and John, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20).

- **Right** – This term refers to that which is correct, just, righteous—to that which is exactly as it should be. The **right attitude** behind the right *act* of obedience is **honor** (*timaō*), which means to value highly, to hold in the highest regard and respect.

Children are to **honor** both their **father and mother**, to hold them in the highest possible respect. When God first introduced His written law in the form of the Ten Commandments, the first law relating to human relationships was, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Ex. 20:12)—and that is the law Paul reiterates in this text. It is the only commandment of the ten that relates to the family, because that one principle alone, when obeyed, is enough to secure the right relationship of children to their parents. Not only that, but it is the key principle behind all right human relationships in society. A person who grows up with a sense of respect for and obedience to his parents will have the foundation for respecting the authority of other leaders and the rights of other people in general.

## Conclusion

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As we conclude this lesson we are left with the challenge as to what we will do with the information that we have been given. Our society wants the Christian community to be silent on the subject of family so that the family unit can more easily be redefined and maligned. This is one of the most important modern day challenges we face as Christians. What you choose to do at this moment regarding the subject of family will impact generations down the line. Choose the path of the Lord and bring Him glory today!

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