

The Biblical Design for Marriage and Family

Core Value #6 – Josh. 24:15

Intro. This morning we come to the sixth core value in our series of ten. Once again, let me explain what we mean by “core values.” A core value is a deeply held belief of our church. Our doctrinal statement defines what we believe the Bible teaches. But core values are guiding principles from the Scriptures that direct our behavior and support our purpose and vision. These core values are issues that really matter to us and define who we are. Because our core values are rooted in the truth of God’s Word, they’re not elastic...they’re solid and constant. They provide direction for our lives and the ministries of our church. Practically speaking, we use them to evaluate how we’re doing and what aspects of our teaching and ministry deserve greater attention and reinforcement.

Let me briefly review the first five: Join me in saying ‘Amen’ after I read each one.

- 1. Biblical Foundation** – *God’s Word is the basis for our lives and ministries.*
- 2. The Centrality of the Church** – *The Church is the center of Christ’s ongoing redemptive activity in the world.*
- 3. Corporate Worship** - *God created us to encounter Him in worship as we exalt Him through music, His Word, prayer and testimony.*
- 4. Servant-Leadership** - *The church must be led by those who see themselves as servants.*
- 5. Prayer** – *Prayer is the believer’s means to connect with God.*

Our sixth core value is expressed this way...***We affirm the biblical design for marriage and family.*** In other words, as believers, we are not free to follow the world’s changing definitions of marriage and family, but ascribe to the definition and design instituted by God and presented in His Word.

The Bible verse chosen to support this sixth value is **Josh. 24:15** which says, **But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.** God’s people were at an historic crossroads when Joshua called them to make a decision. His challenge is relevant to our times with regard to what we believe about marriage and the family. In America’s culture war, the battlefield of fiercest conflict is the family. At no other time in the life of our country has the family been under such focused attack by those who stand in defiance to God’s truth. Activist courts and radical extremists are pushing an agenda that supports homosexuality / transgender confusion / and same-sex marriage. Having no moral compass, their agenda opens Pandora’s box to a host of distortions that were unthinkable just half a century ago. Like the frog in the kettle, many in the Church have slowly but surely warmed up to sins that make the wrath of God boil.

But that’s not why we assemble for worship. I trust you come to hear God’s revelation...the solid rock that remains forever unchanged by satanic deceitfulness and storms of societal opinion. It is on this authoritative Word from God we take our stand upon. Our first core value is Biblical Authority which affirms the source and final arbiter of what we believe to be true and right. By this infallible Word every godless philosophy is measured and tested. To be salt and light in this dark world...to speak the truth in love...we must know what God has said. So while the message this morning may be old news for many of you...where else do people hear it but from the pulpits of churches that still believe.

Even though the IFCA has numerous resolutions concerning the biblical design of marriage and family, Article 18 of the Baptist Faith and Message provides a definition that is helpful to us this morning. So with your permission, we'll step over the low fence separating Bible churches from Baptist churches, knock on their door and ask to borrow a cup of sugar. Seeing no objections, I'll proceed. Article 18 reads this way... *"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."*

1. The foundations of the family – Kurt Bruner writes a helpful paragraph about the purpose of the family. *"We know artists by their most important creations: Michelangelo by the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Beethoven by his "Fifth Symphony," George Lucas by the Star Wars saga. Each masterpiece reveals something of its creator. The same is true of God. We catch a glimpse of the Artist at work by reading the first two chapters of Genesis. He spoke galaxies into existence, formed the mountains, filled the oceans, and planted forests with a magnificent range of color and variety. His playful side is evident in creatures such as humming birds, ostriches and skunks. But the masterpiece that reveals more about God than anything else shows up when God made something called "family".*

It's a sad sign of the times that societal change forces us to define what we mean by *family*. In the past, western societies were influenced by the Judeo-Christian worldview. We grew up with a generally agreed upon understanding that a family consisted of *those who were married, related by blood or by adoption*. Yet efforts to redefine the family...efforts aided by activist courts and Hollywood productions, demonstrate how far our culture has drifted from its moorings in biblical truth. While the unsaved world believes redefinition is a sign of enlightenment and progress, Christians have a fixed understanding given to us in God's revelation, the Bible. So what does the Bible say about the family?

Gen. 2:23, 24 says, **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. v.24** sets forth the biblical pattern as it was instituted by God. One man is united to one woman in marriage and the two form one new natural family. The physical aspect of their one flesh union, often results in conception and childbirth. This is in keeping with God's original command to be fruitful and multiply.

Back in April, the farewell for Zac and Leigh Loyd (Bill and Vicky's missionary kids) was held in a community center over in Matawan, Michigan. Because of their tie with families from their church and home-school group, the center was overrun with small children. When I met their pastor, I asked if he'd been preaching a series on God's command to be fruitful and multiply. He smiled and said, *"Actually, that's one passage we avoid!"*

Jeff Foxworthy said, *"If you ever start feeling like you have the goofiest, craziest, most dysfunctional family in the world, all you have to do is go to a state fair. Because five minutes at the fair, you'll be going, 'you know, we're alright. We are dang near royalty."* Because of sin and death, many families are not what God intended them to be. For a variety of reasons, some don't fit the narrow sense of the Bible's definition. Many families have only one parent in the picture. For blended families, step-parents and their children have entered the scene. Some families have grandparents bravely pinch-hitting as surrogate parents and others have grandparents living in the family home. Other families have adopted family members and include people who are in no way related by blood. In spite of all this diversity, God loves the family. His love and grace extends to all people, regardless of where they may find themselves. We're all sinners who are broken and in need of His repair. But despite all the diversity...we must not follow the culture that is determined to redefine the family just because so many families don't fit the narrow sense of the Bible's definition.

To buy into the open / inclusive / and godless definition urged by many, is a liberty that is not ours to take. The family unit was designed by God to be the most basic institution in all of human society and to reflect His glory in the world. The Lord never intended the family to become a laboratory for social experiment nor did He intend His original design to be re-engineered. Since the family is founded on marriage, we need to remind ourselves of what the Bible says about that union.

2. The definition and sanctity of marriage – The Baptist confessional statement affirms that *“Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.”* Marriage is a unique picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church. It provides the framework for the intimate companionship between a man and his wife / the channel for sexual expression / and the means for procreation of the human race. **Heb. 13:4** says, **Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.**

Having enthroned Christ as King and final authority, we stand firm on the conviction that God intends marriage to be between one man and one woman. This is established in the **Gen. 1, 2** creation account where God created one man and one woman. He didn't create two men, nor did He create two women. He didn't create one man to live with four women either. God made one man and one woman each having a distinct chromosomal pattern to identify their gender. He created Adam and Eve. This was His design for marriage and His plan remains unchanged.

God also created human sexuality as a way for a husband and wife to deepen the intimacy of their relationship and as the means for furthering the human race. Sex is a gift of God to be reserved for marriage alone. Contrary to God's design, our society promotes the idea that sex is all about physical pleasure. Yet sex outside of marriage is rooted in the sinful nature of man, not in God's design. This means that every form of sex outside of marriage is sin. As **I Thess. 4:3-8** says, **It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God...**

Yet in defiance of God's plan, it's estimated that in the US, 11 million unmarried single people live together. A recent article in the Bloomberg Report says, *“Three of four women in the U.S. have lived with a partner without being married by the age of 30, an increasing trend that suggests cohabitation is now a regular part of family life in the U.S...”*

In his book, The Broken Hearth, William Bennett writes, *“More than half of all marriages today are preceded by a period when the couple lives together.”* According to sociologist Pamela J. Smock these trial relationships are very unstable and only 1 in 6 last at least 3 years and only 1 in 10 last 5 years or more. She further states that those who live together before marriage seriously damage their chances for ever having a successful marriage. The instance of divorce for those who live together before marriage is more than twice what it is for couples who didn't live together! These statistics demonstrate the wisdom of God's plan while exposing the foolishness of those who disregard it.

Another problem facing the family in America is the plague of divorce. During the last decade, the number of families headed by single mothers grew at a rate nearly 5 x's that of families headed by a mother and a father. Commenting on the most recent census, the Washington Post noted that *“the statistics show no reversal of a decade long national trend away from the historically dominant household of married couples with children.”*

This morning at the Welcome Center we have about a 100 copies of an excellent brochure entitled, *The Bible's Teaching on Marriage and the Family*, written by Andreas J. Kostenberger of the Family Research Council. If you're interesting in studying the subject further, I encourage you to take one. In the article, Mr. Kostenberger documents the Bible's record of what happens when society sets aside God's design for marriage and sexuality. He writes, "*Humanity's rebellion against the Creator's purposes led to at least the following six negative consequences: (1) polygamy; (2) divorce; (3) adultery; (4) homosexuality; (5) sterility; and (6) gender role confusion.*" King Solomon said, "**There's nothing new under the sun.**" So write it down, the social experiment happening in our times has been tried before and the results have always been disastrous!

3. The purposes and function of the family – Kurt Bruner writes, "*Two essential elements of family - marriage and parenthood - reveal God's character like nothing else in Creation. The love between a husband and wife provides a glimpse of Christ's passionate devotion to us as His bride. In the same way, the ups and downs of parenthood offer a compelling picture of God's tenderness and patience toward us as His children. And family does more than reflect God's character. It provides a safe place where children can experience God's love (through their parents) and learn how to love other people. Even Christ himself was born within the context of a family. "God in the flesh" submitted to an earthly mom and dad to model what it means to honor parents and to benefit from their loving direction. It was within the nurturing care of His earthly family that "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). Our children need to know that God has a special purpose for placing them in a family.*"

The Baptist Faith and Message we borrowed from this morning says, "*The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image.*" The relationship between a man and his wife 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 leadership of Christ. She, being in the image of God like her husband, is equal to him. But she has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation." The equality they share doesn't mean they have the same role or function in the family. I realize this isn't politically correct but my boss has called to preach the Word whether it's politically correct or not.

The predominant philosophy in the world today is egalitarianism or equalism. This view insists that not only are men and woman of equal worth, but that no distinction should be made in their roles. This philosophy drives the idea that women can and should participate in combat / have a career while raising a family / and lead the church occupying the role of elders, deacons and pastors. Many insist Paul was a male-chauvinist and the NT reflects an archaic 1st century viewpoint. Yet as Bible believing Christians, we believe that **all Scripture is God breathed (II Tim. 3:16)** and without mistakes or statutes of limitations. We further believe that God has given us specific instructions as to how people are relate to one another in the family. Included are distinct roles assigned to both the man and the woman in marriage as well as to children in the family.

With respect to the relationship between a man and his wife, the term that describes their relationship best is *complementarianism*. This means that when the husband and the wife fulfill their God given roles, they compliment each other within the family unit. God made woman to complete man, not to compete with Him. **Eph. 5:22-25 say, Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**

The God-given responsibilities in marriage are clear. Husbands are to love their wives sacrificially, putting their wife's well-being above and ahead of their own. They are to follow the example of Jesus who loved us so much that He laid down His rights and gave Himself for us on the cross. This is how husbands are to love their wives. Wives are to respond to their husbands by submitting to his loving leadership, which means she will put herself beneath his God given authority. The husband who loves His wife sacrificially and the wife who joyfully submits to his loving leadership provide a terrific example for their children! Love and respect are transferable concepts best learned during childhood in a home where Christ's Word is honored and obeyed.

We also affirm, as the Scripture teaches, that children are a blessing and a heritage from the Lord from the moment of conception. Nothing could be more relevant and bring greater rebuke to our culture than this God established reality. The number of US abortions since abortion was legalized in 1973 will reach almost 60 million by the end of the year. Since 1980, the number of abortions worldwide is rapidly approaching 1.5 billion. This is an abomination God will certainly judge.

In the context of family, parents are obligated to provide for the material needs of their children (**I Tim.5:8**) and to see that they receive a good education. The earliest and most important educational institution is the home, where children are taught the foundations and principles of godly living. (**Deut. 6:6-9; Prov. 22:6**). Because so much public school instruction is based on a godless worldview, Christian parents must be careful their children are trained to understand life from a biblical viewpoint. Their training must include continual evaluation and correction of what they are being taught. Where necessary and possible, parents should consider home schooling or Christian schools controlled by parents.

Spiritually, parents are obligated to dedicate their children to God and to pray for them that they may be brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. They must then instruct them in the Christian faith / set a good example / and encourage them to express their trust in Christ publically. Every relationship within the family must be subject to the lordship of Christ. **Eph. 6:1-3** says, **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise--"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."** To honor your father and your mother means more than simply to obey them, it means to do it with the right attitude. Obedience is more than a willful act, it is a heart attitude. There's no reward from God if you obey your parents with a grump or a grudge. To honor them means to speak to them respectfully and to defer to their judgment. Everything in our culture, including children's programs and sitcoms runs counter to this teaching. But this is one reason we are still here. God hasn't called us to blend in to the culture, He has called us to be different from the culture. He has called us to be salt and light...to have a persevering influence in a deceived and decaying world.

4. The church and the family – If you aren't involved in a Life Group tonight, I encourage you to come back at 6 PM when we'll discuss this point in greater detail using some interesting suggestions from Dr. John Piper and son Noel. The relationship between the family and the Church should never be competitive, but should be mutually beneficial...each making a contribution to the growth and well-being of the other. The Church can never replace responsibilities committed to parents but should recognize the family as the basic unit. For some people, the family of God is their only family left on earth. It is our business to encourage discipleship within the home. The various activities the church provides should not destroy family unity but rather draw family members more closely together. Our purpose must be to encourage and strengthen marriages and families.

In turn, the family should recognize the blessing and responsibility of gathering together with the people of God for corporate worship and as a witness to the world.

They need to experience and sense their parent's appreciation for the larger dimension of God's family in the world. The Christian family functioning in harmony and as a unit is a blessing to society. Believers are the "light of the world" and the "salt of the earth."

To homes and families that are dedicated to Christ, a sweet assurance is given. The Lord said, **"I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing."** - Ezek. 34:26