

## Week 27

# The Family

### Key Verses

**Colossians 3:18-21** Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. (NASB)

## + Introduction

From the beginning of creation, God had family in mind. Genesis 2:18 says, *"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.'"* God then created Eve from the rib of Adam, and then God told them to be fruitful and multiply. Scripture goes on to say, *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."* (Gen 2:24 NASB) This was the beginning of the family. It was also the beginning of the challenges of being a family.

There are no perfect families – not one. Since families are composed of human beings, who each have a sinful nature, there is always some degree of dysfunction. Even the very first family of four had challenges. Adam and Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel; they began as a family of four. However, Cain murdered his brother Abel, and they became the first broken family of sorts. The story found in Genesis 4 details a very sad situation when Cain allowed jealousy to grow to the degree of murder. In Genesis 4:7, God speaking to Cain uses the phrase, *"sin crouching at the door."* That continues to be the case in every family since the days of Adam and Eve. Sin is crouching at the door of what God intends for family. Sin is crouching at the door of parents and children. Sin is crouching at the door of relationships between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters. Sin is now even crouching at the door of how one defines family.

In Genesis 4:7, the very next sentence spoken by God to Cain is aptly true today, *"Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."* The desire for "sin" conflicts with what God wants for His children. God has given us the ability and dominion to rule over that which is crouching at the door. It is not easy to overcome and is a constant challenge of embracing never-changing truth in an ever-changing culture.

Our goal as believers is to mature in our relationship with God on a week-to-week and year-to-year basis. As we do so, there will be less dysfunction in our families, and we will better represent what God intended from the beginning.

In God's wisdom, He established the family. He knew that the relationships of husband and wife, parents and children, children and siblings, grandparents and grandchildren would provide encouragement and opportunities to build character. Whether you have a very good family (not perfect) or a family with some major struggles, we all need to commit to learn more about what Scripture says and apply these important principles to our lives and our family!

## ✦ The Family: Under Attack

The nuclear family has been around for 6000+ years. There are many times in history when it has come under attack from outside sources.

The modern secular concept of the family is largely driven by sociological theories and assumes that marriage and the traditional family structure are merely the products of human social evolution. Thus, proponents of the secular view believe that because the family is simply a sociological development, it can be renegotiated and restructured to meet modern expectations.<sup>1</sup>

Remember, sin is crouching at the door. Since the family is God's idea and a foundational institution that provides stability to society, the enemy, the devil, desires to destroy the family by distorting each person's roles in the family. Government legislation and societal views have tried to diminish the role of the family. Heterosexual couples are living together without the long-term commitment of marriage. Homosexual couples are demanding (and getting) permission to marry and being given the same status as traditional couples of one man and one woman. Large percentages of children are growing up in fatherless families.

The attack on the family is far-reaching and cannot be ignored. Television, social media, movies, music, the education system, legislation all seem to be conspiring to change the view of what family looks like and how it functions. There is a concerted effort on virtually every television show to have characters that are homosexual or transgender in the context of family or a relationship.

Even the once conservative, family-friendly Hallmark Channel has succumbed to the pressure of our culture. In January 2020, their CEO, Bill Abbott, was let go because he decided to pull a commercial of a lesbian couple getting married. The response had a ripple effect.

Alphonso David, president of the nonprofit Human Rights Campaign, said in a statement that companies and their leaders "must continue to provide visibility to LGBTQ people."

"Bill Abbott's departure from Hallmark just months after the disastrous and wrongheaded decision to censor an ad on their network featuring a loving, same-sex couple continues to make clear: opposing equality isn't just wrong, it's bad for business," David said.<sup>2</sup>

One year later in February 2021 a headline stated this, "Hallmark Channel promises more LGBTQ characters: 'This is who we are' CEO says."<sup>3</sup>

It goes beyond one television channel; this mindset has become a national pastime with indoctrination in multiple areas to make it seem "natural" and the "family of the present and future."

All of this is contrary to God's plan and grieves His heart. We, as His Church, need to strengthen our families and be an example to our society that is in desperate need of examples. Our response needs to be based on biblical principles and God's direction, not merely a political view or cultural shift. May God help us to do so in this generation, to strengthen the next generation. .

## ✦ The Family: Husbands and Fathers

Husbands: accept your role as a Spiritual Leader in your family. It is our responsibility to lead our family. We are responsible for leading our wives and our children. In Genesis 2:18, God explains His provision of a "helper" to assist.

Some women may see the term "helper" and feel slighted. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, wives enhance their husbands in relationship, work, character, and life.

Matthew Henry would capture the concept this way in his comments on Genesis 2.

That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.<sup>4</sup>

Matthew Henry did not write this in the 21st Century rather in the mid-1800s. He knew that there was equality between men and women in their creation. There is a fulfillment of purpose with man and woman becoming one in marriage. However, there are specific roles, specific strengths, and even specific weaknesses that each brings to the relationship.

Ephesians 5 paints a wonderful picture of the roles of husband and wife. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25). That means there is sacrifice, humility, strength, submission to God, and willingness to be a servant.

It is God's plan for men to be responsible and the servant leader in our homes.

How can you do this?

- **Make your relationship with God the top priority in your life.** Do not allow your job, hobbies, or other interests to rob you of the most important role that God has given you. Your family is depending on YOU and your success in spiritually leading them. Get alone with God and ask Him to lead you and guide you as you “step up” in this area of your life. Read His Word, be active in Worship and weekend Bible Study, participate in men’s small group and other activities that can grow you in this area.
- **Love your wife.** God’s love for His church is so immense that He was willing to offer His Son as a payment for our sins. Ephesians 5:25-28 tells you that you should love your wives with that same quality and quantity of love.

**EPHESIANS 5:25-28** *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so 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 would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. (NASB)*

Ask God, and your wife, how you can better express love to her and honor God by doing so.

- **Don’t Exasperate Your Children.** As you lead your family, lead in such a way that you do not exasperate or provoke your children to anger. Colossians 3:21 says, “*Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.*” (NASB). Ephesians 6:4 says, “*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” (NASB).

If you are too strong or too weak, you will most likely push your children toward rebellion. You need a balanced approach to fatherhood. Be present, be involved in their lives, praise and encourage ten times more than you correct, and tell them you love them and are proud of them. Ultimately, as husbands, depend on God’s Spirit to direct you and to work in the lives of your children, and the results will be in His hands.

## ✦ The Family: Wives and Mothers

Of all the things God could have created for Adam not to be alone, He chose to create a woman. There is a fulfillment in that part of creation that changed history. It is foundational to understand that a woman is not lesser than a man. There is increased strength and purpose between a man and woman in the context of husband and wife. Eve was created to be Adam’s helper, to come alongside him and encourage him. Each wife plays an extremely important role in each marriage and takes on a “super-human” role if that marriage is blessed with children. Women have been given tremendous power for good in their husbands’ lives. God has designed wives to help their husbands become all that God intends for them to be.

As you serve the Lord by being the best wife you can be, you need to seek His wisdom every day and look to His Word for guidance. Here are two important principles to remember:

- **Respect Your Husband.** Ephesians 5:22-24 explains,

**EPHESIANS 5:22-24** *Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.* (NASB)

On this subject, Dr. Emerson Eggerichs says, “What we try to share is that the best way to love a husband is to show him respect in ways that are meaningful to him. Such respect lets him feel his wife’s love for him and ignites in him feelings of love for his wife.”<sup>5</sup>

Being “subject” to your own husband in no way indicates that you are less important, or inferior to your husband. In fact, there is great strength and responsibility in this endeavor. The fullness of Ephesians 5 is that it is a spiritual representation mirroring Jesus Himself as the bridegroom and the church as the bride. And do not forget that it begins with the husband and wife “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:21) Biblical submission allows a wife to follow her husband’s lead confidently. And Ephesians 5:23 makes it clear that a man does have responsibility for leadership in his home. But again, it is only as a *leader* that his wife submits to him – not as a *tyrant* or her *superior*.<sup>6</sup>

- **Remain Under Your Husband’s Authority.** As you “respect” your husband and serve under his authority, you can be assured that God is pleased and will bless you. The wise husband will listen to his wife’s counsel. When God directs a husband and also directs a wife, then they can reach a consensus on issues. Being under your husband’s authority gives you freedom; what an incredible opportunity to show unity as husband and wife, which is not common in our culture, especially as seen via media. If you feel that your husband is not leading the family in the right direction, pray to our Heavenly Father and talk with your husband about the situation.

## + The Family: Children

In our ever-changing culture, it is important to be consistent in the lives of your children. We live in a time when the definition of “family” is a matter of political and social controversy, and our culture is confused about the definition of “marriage.” Christians bear the unique responsibility to tell the truth, live the truth, and bear witness to God’s loving intention to establish marriage and the family for our good.<sup>7</sup>

Children are a blessing from God. From the beginning God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. God told Abraham that he would be a father of many nations. We are here today because our parents were fruitful and multiplied. But the parents’ responsibility does not stop there; it

continues throughout each stage of a child's life. Each stage is different and offers a unique opportunity to fulfill Scripture.

- **When Young: Obey.** Ephesians 6:1 says, *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."* A young child needs detailed direction from someone that loves them and desires the best for them. Children need to see their parent's love for them and must be taught to obey. It comes down to a choice that begins at a young age. Obedience sets a pattern for both the parent and child.
- **When Teenagers: Remain Under Authority.** Teenagers tend to rebel against any authority and want to make all of their own decisions. Rebellion always leads to correction: from parents, from authorities, or from God. Parents should keep their relationships strong with their children during this season of their lives, and children should surrender to God, and their parents, to remain under their authority. It will always be best for them.
- **When Adults: Honor.** Ephesians 6:2 says, *"Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."* As adults, children are no longer under the authority of their parents but should still honor and respect them. Part of honoring our aging parents is to care for them in the latter years of their lives and not neglect them. You honor God as you honor your parents!

## + Conclusion

There is no way to fulfill your purpose and role as a man, woman, husband, wife, father, or mother or child without starting with prayer. Strength comes from prayer. Unity is found when you pray together as husband and wife. Comfort comes from God as you pray for your children. Praying to our Heavenly Father builds confidence in our roles within our family.

Do not forget that you have a resource book that has stood the test of time and culture, the Bible. Learn from the mistakes of David, who was a wonderful king, but not so great as a father. From Abraham and Isaac, in how Abraham was completely submissive to God in all things, including his family. You can learn from the Wisdom books such as Proverbs and Psalms how to handle difficult relationship situations. The Word of God is intended to teach and train us in how to live our lives in our specific roles.

**2 TIMOTHY 3:16** *All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness.*

Before you even consider submitting yourselves to one another, first submit yourselves to God. Seek Him first in all things (Matthew 6:33). Your relationship to your spouse and children is a reflection of your relationship with God through Jesus Christ. You are not alone as an individual, couple, or family. Jesus promised to send the Helper. When Jesus was talking to His disciples the night before He was crucified, He told them He would be leaving them, but they would not be left alone.

**JOHN 14:16** *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may be with you forever;*<sup>17a</sup> *the Helper is the Spirit of truth.*

As believers, we are not alone; we have a Helper in all aspects of our life. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth is our Helper to walk with us each step of the way.

Finally, do not forget to talk with one another. You are a family unit, and there needs to be communication in all directions. No one should feel isolated or left out of the situation. Talk with your spouse and your children about the strengths of your family, the dysfunctions of your family, and how each of you can adjust to make your family more pleasing to God.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles S. Kelley Jr., Richard Land, R. Albert Mohler Jr.; *The Baptist Faith & Message*, LifeWay Press, Nashville, TN, 2007; p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/hallmark-channel-parent-ceo-out-after-same-sex-marriage-ad-n1120616>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/hallmark-channel-promises-more-lgbt-characters-this-is-who-we-are-ceo-says.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/genesis/2.html>

<sup>5</sup> Emerson Eggerichs, *Love and Respect*, Veereniging, 2005, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-qa/submission-of-wives-to-husbands/>

<sup>7</sup> *The Baptist Faith & Message*, LifeWay Press, Nashville, TN, 2007; p. 172.