



God's Blueprint for the Family

For the past couple of weeks, you have been considering God's blueprint for the family. You have been instructed by your pastor and by the Holy Spirit (if paying attention) on the fact that the institution of the family is a gift, and mandate, from our God. As such, it is good for us to consider exactly what He has in mind for us in this arena. We understand that:

Jesus must be the Cornerstone of the family.

Without this reality, the family has no chance. Period. It will never succeed or fulfill the purpose for which it has been designed. If Christ is not at the very heart of your family, this must be corrected or their will never be peace, prosperity or purpose in your family. Do not pass Go, go directly to Christ.

God has established a very clear marriage covenant.

One man, one woman, seeking God first, for life. Period. No alteration of this design will result in satisfactory or fulfilling results. No other interpretation or deviation of this can be offered and still be acceptable to the Architect, nor fulfill the purpose of the family and our places within it.

Today we will look at the work of the family within the context of serving the God who gave us our family, under that Lordship of Christ and within the Biblical definition of marriage and family.

The family has a defined mission to accomplish.

God is an ultimately practical God. He is a perfect and precise architect and engineer. As such, He does not have extraneous parts or non-functioning pieces. He has also clearly designed all of His work with the end in mind. He has backwards-designed all of His creation - that is, He has purposed in His mind the outcome and reason for all things to exist and has designed them to be able to achieve that purpose. All of our labor then, must be evaluated against our progress toward or achievement of, this work. Today, we will be carefully considering the work of the family in fulfilling our design.

Just a small note before we proceed. In many of our minds, we have allowed a number of variations on a theme when it comes to the way we operate against God's design. We can look around and see that the world's relativism has crept into the modern practice of "christianity" and that many have felt it appropriate to "evolve" (devolve?) their interpretation of fundamental teaching regarding our relationships to one another. Our society is re-defining what the family is to be. We must, with strong love and compassion, be adamant about the real meaning, intent and definition of the family in the image of our God. There is never a better time to offer clarity than when someone cannot see clearly!

As one who reads a lot, I don't wish to waste my time reading the opinions or thoughts of someone who does not have the credentials to teach me. I want to know the author's background and training in order to know if they will have something of value to contribute. In this vein, you might ask about my credentials to speak on the issue of God's design for the family. I offer the following:

My grandparents on my mom's side served God together for more than sixty years of marriage, teaching the Word to their families and lived a life of following Jesus in their work ethic and service to others. My wife's grandparents have spent their entire lives in seeking and following Jesus, and will have their 70th anniversary this summer. Christi's parents have spent their lives together in vocational ministry and have walked together for 48 years so far. My parents have their 51st anniversary this summer and have always been in the work of the Father, from the first days of their engagement until now.

(Pics of family here if available)

My father and mother raised us to know and follow God. They showed this in word and deed. My daddy led me to Christ when I was 7 and I was baptized by his hands.

Christi and I will have 25 years of marriage logged as of July 13th of this year and she has been my equal partner in our work for our Boss from our teenage years until now. We have made music, ministry and children together.

Each of our children has expressed a saving faith in Christ. I have had the distinct pleasure of being able to baptize all of my children. Many, by the way, led to the Lord by the faithful work of Western Hills followers of Christ!

I cannot tell you how much fun it is to wake up every day next to one who seeks God first in her life, and expresses that discipleship in the care for her family and to all of those she comes in contact with. God has deeply blessed me in my spouse, children and family heritage of serving God.

I do not intend to mess this up. I will not yield to the world and allow it to destroy, defile or redefine what the family is to be or our work for our Father. We must set our minds and hearts on the truth of God.

Joshua 24:14-15

14 “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

I love to work. I believe that in work we find purpose, meaning and fulfillment. Work is a profound gift from God. However, only work done for Him has any real value.

Work:

Activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result

God has established a very clear mission for the family.

All of creation is to reveal and bring praise to Him. This is especially true in His crowning achievement, people. We are the very image of God. We exist to bring glory to our creator through the fulfillment, obedience, of our lives within his design. This is true individually and in any of the communities in which we find ourselves.

In most significant ways, it seems that the mission for the family is the same as the other institution we have been given on earth, the Church. It also seems clear that both of these institutions, their purpose and their operation spring from our individual mandate as followers of Christ and as those who believe in the One True God. We can find this clearly stated in the final words of Jesus recorded by Matthew.

Matthew 28:16-20

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

What is the practical expression of this idea? What does it look like if a family is clearly on mission for their God? What is the specific work of a family that desires to clearly fulfill the intention and design of their God? I’m glad you asked!

Individual acceptance of the Lordship of Christ

Lost sheep are a pain in the flock. Prodigals are a major distraction. Wayward children, lazy or poorly focused fathers, distracted mothers - all cause cracks in the foundations of our families. In seeking to keep our family on mission, attention must be paid to each individual and to the relationships between individuals. (husband/wife, parent/children, sibling/sibling, etc.)

I would encourage you not to waste any time whatsoever in dealing with issues that arise. Capture, as the author advises in Song of Solomon, the second chapter, those little foxes that would destroy the vineyard.

Above all, a parent's mandate is to share the true Gospel to their children and to teach them to follow Jesus.

Collective acceptance of the guidance of Scripture

Within the family, there must be the unity that comes through the focus of following God. All have contributions within this framework. All members will be called to sacrifice and all will receive the blessings of the family that follows hard after God.

To have this agreement, we have to intentionally spend time in the Word and under solid teaching. We need to grow, somewhat, in parallel to one another. All members of the family must be exposed to the real Truth of the Word of God.

Corporate acceptance of the work of the family

Ministry, vocational or otherwise, is not simply the work of the father or mother. It is the work of all members of the family. It is within this context that the training of our children makes the most sense!

We are to work together, on mission. This is great joy, too, when the sweet harmony of family happens when we are in the work together. Not mom's work, dad's ministry, daughter's mission trip, son's talent, but the ensemble of believers with the same surname pulling together on the same ropes.

When I work with an architect to design a building, it is with careful consideration and deliberate decisions that we settle on our final drawing. Every detail is debated. Form always follows function for me. When the process is completed, I hand this over to a General Contractor and their sub-contractors to implement.

I do not tolerate any deviation from the design. I expect that they will build exactly what I have specified, and do so with excellence, to the best of their abilities as craftsmen.

How much more so our work within the design specifications of the family? We must seek to fulfill, to the best of our abilities, the work of building our family to His satisfaction and in the work of our family to fulfill its purpose as defined by our God, not us.

What are the practical expressions of His work through the family?

- Fulfillment of the Great Commission.
- Followers of Christ in word and deed.

James 1:22-27

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

We realize that we are not the owners of what we have, merely the stewards of all He has allowed us to manage on His behalf. Matthew 25 shows us His expectations in this regard. How good it will be to be greeted with, “well done, my good and faithful servant!”

I remember when we visited Trinity Baptist Church in Norman. The building was full of children and families. I realized that these families were not all biological, but that dozens of adopted and foster children filled the building. How wonderful. A bit energetic and slightly frazzled, but truly beautiful!

None of the work of being on mission as a Christ-centered family will happen by accident, nor will it maintain itself. We must work through the day-to-day practice of personal sanctification (until we die,) and this must be our practice within the family as well.

Take some time this week to consider how your family devotes its time, talent and treasure. Do the expenditure of these resources line up, clearly, with the work of the Kingdom? If not, make deliberate decisions to realign your work and resources to His purpose.

What do families on mission look like? Like those who love God, serve Jesus, and focus their collective lives on bringing joyful glory to the One who gave them life. We see this practically expressed through influence in their world as bringers of salt and light. We see

this in adoption of the fatherless. We see this in the service to the widows. We see this in the sacrificial giving of time and treasure to the work of the Kingdom. We see this in families that work to leave a permanent legacy of Christ in their family lineage, not robust retirement accounts, tracts of land or names on streets and highways.

What a joy to be on mission for the King. Will you accept this meaningful life for you and your family, or will you work within a flawed and failed design, a counterfeit offered by the world?

The answer is clear.