
SHINING THE LIGHT IN OUR HOMES
OUR MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES
AS LIGHTS FOR THE LOST

Sunday:

God's Handbook on Marriage – The Song of Songs



Prepared by Jonathan Caldwell and David Miles

3rd Quarter 2022

www.wearesimplychristians.com

INTRODUCTION

“Each day I’ll shine!” Bill Sanchez told us in the spring that one of the main factors in his conversion to Christ was the lifestyle, attitudes, and relationships of the Christians he knew. He did not know people who were so happy, kind, and sacrificial. He assumed they were putting on a show. He came to understand that they were sincere and that the cause was Christ!

Consider the chaos in the world around us. Think about the homelife of your neighbors, coworkers, schoolmates, and friends. Parents fight. Mom cheats. Dad is abusive. Brothers yell. Sisters sneak out. The divorce rate in this country is ridiculously high. It is not hard to be a bright light in such a dark world. Have you thought about the fact that your marriage could be a light to others? Have you considered that your family could help another family to come to Jesus Christ?

On Sundays this quarter, we will study the Song of Songs. This is an unusual book. We do not often study it. When we do, we do it quickly, and we don’t make eye contact. Well...prepare yourself. This is **God’s Handbook on Marriage**. To be clear, it is not really a “how to” book. It is more of a picture of a man and woman who love each other so completely that we can’t help but pick up some pointers. And yes, the book has sex in it. But if our marriages are what they should be, maybe we can be an example to those who’s marriages are sinking. What makes our marriages work? The Lord!

On Wednesdays, we will talk about the family and parenting. This is an essential discussion because of the world we live in and the dangers ever facing our children. How can we have **A Godly Family in Ungodly Times**? David will teach this class. One of the qualifications for elders relates to their children. It will be helpful for one with such experience and success in this realm to lead this study.

Sometimes jealousy can be a good thing. If it causes you to work hard, learn more, and grow, jealousy can be helpful. People want what we have. People long for a happy home. Let’s work on ours by submitting to Christ and maybe we will have an opportunity to be a light for those who aren’t so fortunate.

Jonathan Caldwell

Shining the Light in Our Homes: Our Marriages and Families as Lights for the Lost

Sundays: God's Handbook on Marriage – The Song of Songs

Date	Topic
Sunday, July 3	1. The Purpose of the Song of Songs
Sunday, July 10	2. Allegorical Readings of the Song of Songs
Sunday, July 17	3. Dramatic Readings of the Song of Songs
Sunday, July 24	4. Reading the Song of Songs as Ancient Love Poetry
Sunday, July 31	5. Song of Songs 1:1-17
Sunday, August 7	6. Song of Songs 2:1-17
Sunday, August 14	7. Song of Songs 3:1-11
Sunday, August 21	8. Song of Songs 4:1—5:1
Sunday, August 28	9. Song of Songs 5:2—6:3
Sunday, September 4	10. Song of Songs 6:4—7:10
Sunday, September 11	Parenting Workshop with Marty Broadwell
Sunday, September 18	11. Song of Songs 7:11—8:14
Sunday, September 25	12. Review, Application, and Evangelism

THE SONG'S PURPOSE

When we think of scripture, we would consider most of what is written to relate to our ultimate salvation from sin. Yet, the Song of Songs sure doesn't sound like it has anything to do with our salvation. So what is its purpose?

- When does sexual immorality enter the Biblical story?
- Read Revelation 22:15. What does the last question and this verse imply about sexual immorality in the Bible?
- What does Leviticus 18 teach about sexual relations?
- Is it enough just to avoid the act of sex? What did Jesus say about this?
- What Bible heroes are guilty of sexual immorality?
- Because of the connection made between sex and sin, what did the Corinthians conclude in 1 Corinthians 7:1?
- The New Testament has a number of "vice lists" – lists which contain various sins, temptations, or vices. Which ones contain sexual immorality or other sexual sins?
- Read Genesis 2:24; Proverbs 5:15-19; and Hebrews 13:4. How do these passages "balance" what we typically think the Bible teaches about sex?

ALLEGORICAL READINGS

With all the negativity surrounding sex in the Bible, surely the Song of Songs is not a book celebrating the physical love between a man and woman! It has to be more spiritual than that. For centuries, this is the major thought surround the Song of Songs. Therefore, it was read as an allegory. It could be read as referring to God and Israel or to Christ and the church.

- Please read the entire book thinking of the man as God and the bride as Israel, or Christ and the church.
 - Does this make sense?
 - What are some problems with reading the book this way?
 - What passages/phrases stand out to you when reading the book with this view in mind?
- Does the Old Testament talk about Israel being a bride to God? What passages support this?
- Does the New Testament talk about the Church being the bride of Christ? What passages support this?
- What internal evidence is there for reading the Song of Songs this way?
- Do you think this is a credible way to read the book?

DRAMATIC READINGS

A second way the Song of Songs has been read is as a drama—almost like a play. This view is popular because it appears that the book is talking about physical love between a man and woman (not God and Israel or Christ and the Church), but it seems obvious that it is not about a specific man and woman. Most of our English versions are edited to be read as a drama. This reading comes in two forms: a two-person view and a three-person view. The two-person view reads the book as a love story between a man and woman. The three-person view reads the book as a love triangle. The shepherd, his love, and Solomon, who is trying to take her into his harem.

- Please read the entire book with this view in mind.
 - Does this make sense?
 - Would you conclude that there are two main characters or three?
 - What are some problems with reading the book this way?
 - What passages/phrases stand out to you when reading the book with this view in mind?
- Imagine there were no chapter and verse divisions. Imagine that your English version did not specify a speaker (those notes are not in the original Hebrew). How would that impact this way of reading the book?
- How does our knowledge of Solomon impact this reading of the book?

ANCIENT LOVE POETRY

The current consensus is that the Song of Songs is a collection of love poems celebrating the relationship (physical and emotional) of a man and woman. It is not one story from chapter 1 to the end of chapter 8. It is not about God and Israel or Christ and the Church. It is poetry describing the love a man and woman have for each other, their feelings as they look at one another, and their enjoyment of sexual union.

- Please read the entire book as a collection of love poems.
 - Does this make sense?
 - What are some problems with reading the book this way?
 - What passages/phrases stand out to you when reading the book with this view in mind?
- It can be difficult to read the book this way because of the way publishers have printed the text in our Bibles. Trying to ignore the chapter and verse numbers, where would you place breaks in these poems? For example, 3:1 obviously begins a new poem or section.
- While the ancient near East was not known for dramas, they were known for their poetry. Especially, their love poetry. These kinds of songs were common in Egypt, Akkadian, and other cultures surrounding Israel. Use the internet to search for the term *wasf*. W-A-S-F.
- If the Song of Songs is a collection of love poetry, then what is the book ultimately about?

SONG OF SONGS 1:1-17

Work with the text. Mark it up. Make notes. Draw connections. Make applications.

<p>“The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.</p> <p>Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine; your anointing oils are fragrant; your name is oil poured out; therefore virgins love you. Draw me after you; let us run.</p> <p>The king has brought me into his chambers.</p> <p>We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine;</p> <p>rightly do they love you.</p> <p>I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother’s sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!</p> <p>Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?</p> <p>If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds’ tents.</p>	<p>Mark who is speaking in each section.</p> <p>Who is the main speaker in this section? Or is it balanced?</p> <p>What does it mean that she is dark?</p> <p>What is she wanting?</p> <p>Why doesn’t he give her an answer?</p>
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<p>I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots. Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels. We will make for you ornaments of gold, studded with silver.</p> <p>While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance. My beloved is to me a satchet of myrrh that lies between my breasts. My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi.</p> <p>Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves. Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful.</p> <p>Our couch is green; the beams of our house are cedar; our rafters are pine."</p>	<p>Who is the king? Is she speaking of her beloved or of Solomon?</p> <p>What are these comments about the house?</p>
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- What could we learn about marriage and love from this section?
- Does this section make more sense as poetry, drama, or allegory?

SONG OF SONGS 2:1-17

Work with the text. Mark it up. Make notes. Draw connections. Make applications.

<p>“I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.</p> <p>As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women.</p> <p>As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!</p> <p>I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.</p> <p>The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.</p> <p>Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me: “Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of</p>	<p>Mark who is speaking in each section.</p> <p>Who is the main speaker in this section? Or is it balanced?</p> <p>Is this line familiar?</p> <p>This is a common refrain throughout the book. What does it mean?</p> <p>Who is speaking here? What is happening?</p>
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SONG OF SONGS 3:1-11

Work with the text. Mark it up. Make notes. Draw connections. Make applications.

<p>“On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. “Have you seen him whom my soul loves?” Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me.</p>	<p>Mark who is speaking in each section.</p> <p>Who is the main speaker in this section? Or is it balanced?</p> <p>What is happening in this section?</p>
<p>I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.</p>	<p>Note this phrase again</p>
<p>What is that coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of a merchant? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon! Around it are sixty mighty men, some of the mighty men of Israel, all of them wearing swords and expert in war, each with his sword at his thigh, against terror by night. King Solomon made himself a carriage from the wood of Lebanon. He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple; its interior was inlaid with love by the daughters of Jerusalem.</p>	<p>What is happening in this section and what does it have to do with this couple?</p>

<p>Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart.”</p>	<p>What is the woman’s relationship with the “daughters of Jerusalem”?</p>
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- What could we learn about marriage and love from this section?

- Does this section make more sense as poetry, drama, or allegory?

SONG OF SONGS 4:1—5:1

Work with the text. Mark it up. Make notes. Draw connections. Make applications.

<p>“Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful!</p> <p>Your eyes are doves behind your veil.</p> <p>Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead.</p> <p>Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young.</p> <p>Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely.</p> <p>Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.</p> <p>Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.</p> <p>Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies.</p> <p>Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.</p> <p>You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.</p> <p>Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards.</p>	<p>Mark who is speaking in each section.</p> <p>Who is the main speaker in this section? Or is it balanced?</p> <p>Consider these descriptions. Are they literal? How are these comments complimentary?</p>
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You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.

How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!

Your lips drip nectar, my bride;
honey and milk are under your tongue;
the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed.

Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all choice spices— a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon.

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow.

Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.

I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.

Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!”

Why is there so much emphasis on her fragrance? Consider the hygiene of these days.

To whom is this line spoken?

- What could we learn about marriage and love from this section?
- Does this section make more sense as poetry, drama, or allegory?

SONG OF SONGS 5:2—6:3

Work with the text. Mark it up. Make notes. Draw connections. Make applications.

<p>“I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking. “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.” I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them? My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone.</p> <p>My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer.</p> <p>The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls.</p> <p>I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.</p> <p>What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you thus adjure us?</p> <p>My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand.</p> <p>His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven.</p>	<p>Mark who is speaking in each section.</p> <p>Who is the main speaker in this section? Or is it balanced?</p> <p>What is happening in this section?</p> <p>Now it is her turn to praise him.</p>
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<p>His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool.</p> <p>His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs.</p> <p>His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh.</p> <p>His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels.</p> <p>His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires.</p> <p>His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold.</p> <p>His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars.</p> <p>His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable.</p> <p>This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.</p> <p>Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?</p> <p>My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies."</p>	<p>This is not the first time we have seen this phrase – “he grazes among the lilies.” What does it mean?</p>
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- What could we learn about marriage and love from this section?
- Does this section make more sense as poetry, drama, or allegory?

SONG OF SONGS 6:4—7:10

Work with the text. Mark it up. Make notes. Draw connections. Make applications.

<p>“You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me—</p> <p>Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead.</p> <p>Your teeth are like a flock of ewes that have come up from the washing; all of them bear twins; not one among them has lost its young.</p> <p>Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.</p> <p>There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her. “Who is this who looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?”</p> <p>I went down to the nut orchard to look at the blossoms of the valley, to see whether the vines had budded, whether the pomegranates were in bloom. Before I was aware, my desire set me among the chariots of my kinsman, a prince.</p> <p>Return, return, O Shulammite, return, return, that we may look upon you.</p> <p>Why should you look upon the Shulammite, as upon a dance before two armies?</p>	<p>Mark who is speaking in each section.</p> <p>Who is the main speaker in this section? Or is it balanced?</p> <p>Does this sound familiar?</p> <p>What does this mean?</p>
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SONG OF SONGS 7:11—8:14

Work with the text. Mark it up. Make notes. Draw connections. Make applications.

<p>“Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages; let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love. The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.</p> <p>Oh that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my mother’s breasts! If I found you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me. I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother— she who used to teach me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!</p> <p>I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.</p> <p>Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?</p> <p>Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor.</p> <p><i>(more on the next page)</i></p>	<p>Mark who is speaking in each section.</p> <p>Who is the main speaker in this section? Or is it balanced?</p> <p>Why does she wish he was a brother?</p>
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<p>Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the <u>LORD</u>. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.</p> <p>We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.</p> <p>I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace.</p> <p>Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred.</p> <p>O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it. Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices."</p>	<p>Some argue that this is the climax of the book. How so?</p> <p>This is not the Hebrew term for Yahweh. In fact, the book does not use God's name at all, like Esther.</p> <p>Who is talking now and what are they talking about?</p>
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- What could we learn about marriage and love from this section?
- Does this section make more sense as poetry, drama, or allegory?

REVIEW, APPLICATION, AND EVANGELISM

After studying the Song of Songs, we should see the balance it provides to the Biblical teaching on sexuality. The physical relationship between a man and woman is given by God, not as an allowance for base desire, but as an intimacy in which to rejoice.

- How do these lovers describe one another?
- What is the role of communication in their relationship?
- What is the role of sex in their relationship?
- What do others notice about them?
- Obviously, sex is for the married couple. It is not something practiced and detailed in public. But what aspects of a relationship might others notice in our marriages?
- What are the dangers of sexual immorality?
- What warnings would you give to younger men and women who are not married about love, marriage, and sex?
- How can couples work together to lead others to the Lord?

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Wednesdays: The Godly Family in Ungodly Times

Date	Topic
Wednesday, July 6	1. The Importance of a Godly Family in an Ungodly World
Wednesday, July 13	2. The Family in the 21 st Century: The Good, Bad, and Ugly
Wednesday, July 20	3. From the Beginning: Lessons from the First Family
Wednesday, July 27	4. The Godly Family: Husbands
Wednesday, August 3	5. The Godly Family: Wives
Wednesday, August 10	6. Divorce in America: Causes
Wednesday, August 17	7. Divorce in America: Consequences and Solutions
Wednesday, August 24	8. The Kids Are Alright...Or Are They? God's Word for Kids in the Middles of Their Parents' Mess
Wednesday, August 31	9. The Kids Are Alright...Or Are They? Rear Kids, Raise Cattle
Wednesday, September 7	10. Family Case Studies: Noah and Abraham
Wednesday, September 14	11. Family Case Studies: Jesus, Paul, Peter, Aquila and Priscilla
Wednesday, September 21	12. The Single Parent Family: Lois, Eunice, and Lydia
Wednesday, September 28	13. The Sermon on the Mount: God's Primer on Healthy Family Relationships

THE IMPORTANCE OF A GODLY FAMILY IN AN UNGODLY WORLD

“The spiritual life of the family is directly tied to the Great Commission and filling the earth with worshippers of Christ.” (Rob Rienow)

A God-centered family constitutes the heart and core of successful soul-winning, our “command post” from which we can go forth and spread the Gospel with confidence and credibility, and to which we can return for rest, growth and spiritual re-charging. Without it we would flounder like an earthly army without a headquarters or an organization without leadership.

Deuteronomy 6:1-7, Ephesians 6:4

- What promise is associated with this command to teach God’s law to children?
- What is the foundational command on which all the others rest?
- Do you see the idea of repetitive instruction in these verses? What does this tell you about the importance of these things?

Psalms 78:3-7

- What must we constantly tell the upcoming generations about our God? In what/whom will succeeding generations place their trust if we do this?

1 Timothy 3:4-5 – What critical work in the Kingdom hinges on a Godly family? Why?

What roles these Godly families play in bringing God's plan for man's salvation to reality?

- Noah
- Abraham
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Joseph and Mary

Acts 2:38-39 – “For the promise is to _____, to your _____ and to _____ that are _____. What might be the significance of this order of things?”

THE FAMILY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE GOOD, BAD, AND UGLY

“Look how good it is when families live together as one” (Psalm 133:1)

In our first two lessons, we learned God’s vision and purposes for the family unit. Wow, have things changed, especially in the last 30-40 years! In this lesson we will look at information from the Bible as well as data from secular research that we can use to renew, protect and preserve the kind of families we must have in order to save ourselves, our children and our neighbors.

- By way of review, how did God define a family in Genesis 1-4?
- There is no doubt that attitudes about marriage are changing dramatically. What changes have you observed?
- Do you believe divorce is more common, less common or about the same as in past decades?
- What does religious faith have on the stability of a family?
- How does technology and social media present both opportunities and dangers to the godly family?
- What is your conclusion about the family in 2022: In danger? Not in danger?
- **Processing my learning:** As a result of this lesson, I will...

FROM THE BEGINNING

LESSONS FROM THE FIRST FAMILY

“God created man in his own image, male and female he created them. He blessed them....And God saw that everything he had made was good.” (Genesis 1:27-31)

When Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees in Matthew 19 about divorce, he didn't give his own “think so,” he didn't quote from the great Rabbis of the day, and he certainly didn't go to the writings and musings of the Gentiles. Instead, he pointed back to “the beginning,” when God's family was exactly as He created it - perfect, pristine, uncorrupt.

Genesis 1 – 4:10.

- A lot has been written and said in recent years about “redefining the family.” How does God define “family”? (Genesis 2:23-24, 4:1-2)

- What is the function of the family, according to Scripture?
 - Genesis 2:18 –

 - Genesis 1:28a –

 - Genesis 2:24 –

 - Ephesians 6:4 –

- Why did God create the woman and what was her role? What does this imply about the man's neediness?

- Describe the relationship between the husband and the wife.
- How does sin corrupt Eve in fulfilling her role in the family? What about Adam?
- How did sin impact Adam and Eve's relationship with each other?
- After the Fall, how did sin impact the man's role in the family from that day until now? The woman?
- Did Adam and Eve instruct their children in the ways of God? Were they successful?
- Consider Ephesians 6:3 and Deuteronomy 5:16. What impact does failure to heed God's ways have on the peace and order of the family?
- Is it possible that Adam and Eve's own struggle with submission to God's authority had an impact on their ability to impress Godliness on their sons?
- To what degree – if any – are Adam and Eve (and modern parents) accountable for their offsprings' choices and behavior?
- What provisions did God make in these chapters for the break-up of the family?
- **Processing my learning:** After studying the example of the First Family, I will...

THE GODLY FAMILY: HUSBANDS

...husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy... (Ephesians 5:25)

- What does the word “love” mean in passages such as Ephesians 5:25 and Titus 2:4?
- Use a good Bible dictionary (print or online) to define the word “holy.” In what sense does a husband declare his wife to be “holy”?
- How might a husband profane the “holiness” of his wife?
- How might a husband “give himself up for” his wife, just as Christ gave himself for the church?
- Read these passages. How does each offer a way for a man to remain faithful to his wife, to treat her as holy to him:
 - James 4:4, 7:8 – Draw near to _____. Resist the _____.
 - Mark 10:8 – Does being “one flesh” with one’s wife only apply to the physical relationship?
 - Matthew 5:27-28, 1 Cor 6:18, Job 31:1 – How can a man keep his heart free of adultery?
 - 1 Peter 5:8 – Be _____.
 - Proverbs 18:1, 17:17, Ecclesiastes 4:9 –
- **Processing my learning:** As a result of this lesson, I will...

THE GODLY FAMILY: WIVES

...as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands...” (Eph 5:24)

...the older woman... urge the younger women to love their husbands...” (Titus 2:3-4)”

- What was the one thing that did not pronounce “good” during Creation? What was His solution?
- The KJV says that God created the woman as a “help mete” for the man. How do more modern English versions render “mete”?
- What does the fact that the woman was to “help” the man infer about the man (and all men to this day)? List some ways that a wife meets the man’s “neediness.”
- Would you call Aquilla and Priscilla (Acts 18:2-3, Romans 16:3) partners or competitors? Why?
- What are some ways a wife can affirm her husband (“esteem him highly”) in public? In the home?
- Read 1 Peter 3:1-4 – What are ways that a wife must make a home a place of quiet refuge for her family, even if the husband is not a Christian?
- **Processing my learning:** As a result of this lesson, I will...

DIVORCE IN AMERICA: CAUSES

*“Why did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”
(Matthew 19:7)*

- How would you rank these religious groups as most likely to divorce, with 1 being most likely and 6 being least likely? Baptist, Mainline Protestants (e.g., Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, etc.), Mormons, Lutherans, non-denominational Evangelicals (that would include churches of Christ), Catholics.
- How would you rank these groups (1 = most likely, 4 = most likely)? “Born-again” Christians, other “Christian” denominations, atheists/agnostics, Jews.
- What about these regions of the country? Mid-west, West, South, Northeast.
- See what you find about the divorce rate in America via Google.
- What does the word “vow” convey in the expression, “wedding vows”?
- How would describe the amount and quality of preaching/teaching on marriage and the family in congregations that you have attended: Too little, too much, about right.
- How does a “hard heart” lead to divorce?
- **Processing our learning:** As a result of this lesson, I will...

DIVORCE IN AMERICA

CONSEQUENCES AND SOLUTIONS

“And God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone.’” (Genesis 2:18)

*“Divorce is a long-term crisis...a life-transforming experience...whether the outcome is good or bad, the whole trajectory of an individual’s life is profoundly altered by the divorce experience.”
(Judith Wallerstein)*

- Divorce has become, sadly a near-universal experience, even within the church. Most everyone has gone through a divorce, or has a family member or friend who has. How does Wallerstein’s quote above compare to what you may have experienced or observed?

- It’s important to remember that not every person or every child experience all – or even most – of the devastating consequences of divorce. There are exceptions. In your experiences, do you know of some children who seemed to deal with a parental break-up fairly well? What appeared, as best you could tell, to make the difference for them?

- What can a local congregation do to help stem the tide of divorce among God’s people?

- What do these passages tell us about God’s prescriptions for avoiding divorce?
 - Matthew 19:6-9

 - Ephesians 5:21-23

 - Ephesians 5:25, 28

- **Processing my learning:** As a result of the lesson, I will...

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT...OR ARE THEY? GOD'S WORD FOR KIDS IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR PARENTS' MESS

"the kids are alright, the kids are alright, the kids are alright" (Pete Townshend, "The Who")

*"Divorce is a life-transforming experience...Whether the outcome is good or bad, the whole trajectory of an individual's life is profoundly altered by the divorce experience."
(Judith Wallerstein, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, pp xxvii-xxviii)*

- When parents divorce, how much responsibility do the children bear? Why do children often take on responsibility for their parents' relationship?
- What is the child's sole responsibility regarding his/her parents (Ephesians 6:1-2)?
- How can faith help kids cope with the break-up of the family (Ecclesiastes 12:1, Matthew 28:20b, Philippians 4:6-7)?
- How does Galatians 6:2 speak to helping kids in the middle of a family crisis?
- Sadly, kids often repeat the same mistakes their parents made in their relationship, and with the same outcome, a divorce. How might these passages help a child avoid that cycle?
 - Matthew 19:6-9
 - Ephesians 5:21-23
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
 - Proverbs 13:20
- **Processing my learning:** As a result of this lesson, I will...

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT...OR ARE THEY?

REAR KIDS, RAISE CATTLE

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it”
(Proverbs 22:6, NKJV)*

- **Proverbs 22:6**

- What is involved in the word “train”?
- What does Solomon mean by the phrase, “when he is old”?
- We all know of apparently on-target Christian parents who seemed to have done this, yet one or more of their children left the Lord. How do you square that reality with this verse?

- **Ephesians 6:4**

- “Nurture” and “admonition” – Meaning that our rearing of godly children must involve a proper balance of what?
 - What does “of the Lord” suggest to you in child-rearing?
- Combining **Ephesians 6:4** with **1 Timothy 5:8**, is it more important to provide for our children’s physical or spiritual needs (Hint: which leg of a tripod is the most important one?).

- As an educator, I found it helpful to understand how kids' brains developed and worked...I just wish I had seen this research before my own kids were grown! Google "research on learning and brain maturation." What might help us as parents.

- It has been observed that when everything is a priority, nothing is. What do these passages teach about our priorities in rearing our children?
 - Proverbs 1:7; 2:6; 13:13; 3:9-10

 - Proverbs 3:11-12

 - Proverbs 12:17, 22

 - Proverbs 13:20; 18:22

- **Processing our learning:** As a result of this lesson, I will...

FAMILY CASE STUDIES

NOAH AND ABRAHAM

“The things that were written down for our instruction...therefore let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:11)

Noah (Genesis 6-9):

- Describe the social/moral/religious environment in which Noah lived (6:1-7, 11-12).
- Describe Noah’s character (6:8-9). What can you infer about Noah’s attitude about God (6:22; 8:20). How many wives did Noah have? What reasonable inferences can we make about: “Mrs. Noah” as a wife and mother? How they reared their children, especially in the kind of environment you described above? About what they taught their children about choosing a spouse (1 Peter 3:20b – how many “persons...were saved by water”?).
- How did the experience of Noah’s family bear out God’s promise in Deu 5:16?
- Despite what is said about Noah in 6:8-9, Noah had a big, big problem – what was it (9:21). What impact did Noah’s problem have on his family (6:22-27)? Do families still suffer from parents with this problem today?

Abraham (Genesis):

- What *major* change occurs in the family structure after the flood: Hint: Abram took “a wife” or “wives” (11:29). Was this God’s way? What problems did this departure from God’s plan cause?
- What are Abraham’s strengths and weaknesses as husband? As a father? What did he teach his children about choosing a spouse (24:3ff)?
- With his many flaws how is it that he is considered the Father of the Faithful? How does this give modern Dad’s some encouragement?

Processing my learning: As a result of this lesson, I will...

FAMILY CASE STUDIES

JESUS, PAUL, PETER, AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

*“He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me”
(Jesus, Matthew 10:37)*

*“...to the unmarried and the widows, I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried...”
(Paul, 1 Corinthians 7:8)*

“have we no right to take a believing wife with us, as do the other apostles, and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas?” (Paul – 1 Corinthians 9:5)

- Jesus and Paul were not married. Peter and, obviously, Aquilla and Priscilla were married. Churches often want a “family man” as their evangelist. What are the advantages/disadvantages of being single for a man (or woman) devoted to spreading the Gospel? What the advantage/disadvantages to the *family*? (1 Corinthians 7:25-35)
- Describe Joseph and Mary (1) as parents (Mt 2:13-15; Lk 2:40-52; Jn 19:25) and (2) as a husband and wife (Mt 1:18-25).
- Describe Jesus as a son. (Lk 2:40-52; Jn 19:26-27; Mk 3:31-34)
- Did Jesus have brothers? Sisters? What were their names? (Matthew 12:46-5; Mark 3:31-35). What was their attitude toward Jesus, at least at first? How many and which ones changed his mind?
- What did Jesus teach about priorities within the family unit? (Matthew 10:37; John 19:26-27)
- Describe Aquilla and Priscilla as partners in evangelism (Acts 18:2-3, 18-19; Romans 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19)
- Were Jesus and Paul “anti-family” as some have claimed?
- **Processing my learning:** As a result of this lesson, I will...

THE 'SINGLE PARENT' FAMILY LOIS, EUNICE, AND LYDIA

"...Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman...was well spoken of by the brethren..." (Acts 16:1-2)
...we went to the riverside...a place of prayer, and we spoke to the women gathered there...One was Lydia...a worshipper of God..." (Acts 16:13-14)

- Why might we consider Eunice and Lois to be "single mothers"?
- Eunice "was a believer," meaning what?
- Where did Eunice get her faith (2 Timothy 1:5)? What might this imply about her own father? How did Lois' example help Eunice manage her own situation as a wife and mother? What other lessons did Lois evidently pass on to her daughter that empowered to be the kind of wife and mother she was (see Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:1--5)?
- What do we *know* about Timothy's father (Acts 16:1)? We might we reasonably *infer* about Timothy's father?
- With all we know about Timothy from Acts and Paul's two letters to him, list some key core values that Eunice appears to have successfully instilled in her son? How did a single mother manage to do this so well?
- Is the "single-mother" model God's ideal for a family structure? Is it unscriptural? What challenges and obstacles does a single Christian mother face? How might the examples of Lois and Eunice encourage and empower a single Christian mother today?

- Where was Lydia when Paul encountered her (Acts 16:13-14)? Why was she there? What does this tell us about her priorities?
- Was Lydia married? Have children? If not, then who was her “household”?
- What influence did her example have on her household when she obeyed the Gospel? What does this suggest about how she was viewed by her household?
- **Processing my learning:** After observing the examples of Lois, Eunice and Lydia, I will...

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

GOD'S PRIMER ON HEALTHY FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

(With Thanks and much appreciation to Sewell Hall)

Member: Preacher, I just don't love my spouse anymore.

Preacher: Well, there's only thing you can do.

Member: Great! What is it?

Preacher: Repent!

Passage	Application to husbands/wives	Application to children/parents	Application to siblings
5:21-22			
5:27-28			
5:31-32			
5:38-39			
5:43-44			

6:1-18			
6:19-34			
7:1-5			

Processing My Learning: As a result of this lesson, I will...