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God's Glorious Vision for the Family

I. Introduction and Contemporary Challenges

“For the first time in its history, Western civilization is confronted with the need to define the meaning of the terms “marriage” and “family.” What until now has been considered a “normal” family, made up of a father, a mother, and a number of children, has in recent years increasingly begun to be viewed as one among several options, which can no longer claim to be the only or even superior form of ordering human relationships.

The Judeo-Christian view of marriage and the family with its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures has to a significant extent been replaced with a set of values that prizes human rights, self-fulfillment, and pragmatic utility on an individual and societal level. It can rightly be said that marriage and the family are institutions under siege in our world today, and that with marriage and the family, our very civilization is in crisis.

The current cultural crisis, however, is merely symptomatic of a deep-seated spiritual crisis that continues to gnaw at the foundations of our once-shared societal values. If God the Creator in fact, as the Bible teaches, instituted marriage and the family, and if there is an evil being called Satan who wages war against God’s creative purposes in this world, it should come as no surprise that the divine foundation of these institutions has come under massive attack in recent years. Ultimately we human beings, whether we realize it or not are involved in a cosmic spiritual conflict that pits God against Satan, with marriage and the family serving as a key arena in which spiritual and cultural battles are fought. If, then, the cultural crisis is symptomatic of an underlying spiritual crisis, the solution likewise must be spiritual, not merely cultural.

...It is not only the world that is suffering the consequences of neglecting the Creator's purposes for marriage and family. The Church, too, having lowered itself to the standard of the world in many ways, has become a part of the problem, and is not offering the solutions the world needs." —Andreas Kostenberger's God, Marriage, and Family, 25-26.

II. Exploring How Scripture Presents the Family

A. The Created Family: The Family is God's institution established in the Garden.

1. Exploring Genesis 1 and 2

- 1.27 God's design of two distinct sexes.
- 1.28 God's call to, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion..."
- 2.18 God declares, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."
- 2.19-20 God proved to Adam that what or who he needed was not to be found among the myriad of fascinating animals.
- 2.21-22 He placed Adam in a deep sleep, and fashioned from his rib, a woman.
- 2.23 Adam awoke and found his dream more than came true. "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."
- 2.24 God was creating a pattern, a pattern of need and desire and dependence, between 2 opposite sexes, a pattern of complementarity that was to be the good and glorious pattern down through the Ages.

2. God's wisdom and goodness in marriage's design and purpose

“God made two out of one, so that he could then make the two into one, one soul and one flesh. This kind of fellowship is possible only between two. For the very beginning, marriage was and is by virtue of its essential nature monogamous, an essential bond between one man and one woman, and therefore also a lifelong covenant, indissoluble by human authority; therefore what God has joined together, let not man put asunder (Matt. 19:6, 8). A man separates from his parents, forsakes father and mother, and cleaves to his wife; but he never abandons his wife! Love for parents is surpassed in both intensity and extent by love for one's wife. Such love is stronger than death. No other love resembles God's love so closely, or reaches such height.

Upon this fellowship of love, then, God has bestowed his blessing in a special way. He is the Creator of man and of woman, the Inaugurator of marriage, and the Sanctifier of matrimony. Each child born is the fruit of fellowship, and as such is also the fruit of divine blessing. The two-in-oneness of husband and wife expands with a child into a three-in-oneness. Father, mother, and child are one soul, and one flesh, expanding and unfolding the one image of God, united within threefold diversity and diverse within harmonic unity.

This three-in-oneness of relationships and functions, of qualities and gifts, constitutes the foundation of all civilized society. The authority of the father, the love of the mother, and the obedience of the child form in their unity the threefold court that binds together and sustains all relationships within human society. Within the psychological life of every integrated personality this cord forms the motif and reality...These three characteristics and gifts are always needed in every society and in every civilization, in the church and in the state. Authority, love, and obedience are the pillars of all human society.”

—Herman Bavink's The Christian Family, pgs 7-8

3. The Implications for our Families: God has designed your family and providentially placed each of you together in your respective roles.

4. The Implications for our Churches: Pastors must champion God's good design. We should not assume that our people discern and live in the

goodness, beauty, and wisdom of it. They need the truth re-established, again and again and again.

B. The Genesis 3 Family: The Family is now flawed and exists in a fallen and hostile world

1. Exploring Genesis 3

- 3.1 “He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden.”’
- 3.4 “But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.” Satan progresses from sowing doubt to spewing his first lie—denying the possibility of Divine Judgment.
- 3.5 “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Satan deceives again.
- 3.6 “So when the woman saw...she took and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”
- 3.7 Their eyes were opened to their sin and shame.
- 3.8 Their new instinct was to hide from the all-good and all-wise God. But we cannot hide from the Omniscient and Holy One.
- 3.9 “God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” When our only instinct is to run and hide and fashion flimsy coverings before a holy God, he comes to us and asks rhetorically, “Where are you?”

“Adam and Eve sinned not only as individuals, as persons, but they sinned also as husband and wife, as father and mother; they were playing with their own destiny, with the destiny of their family, and with the destiny of the entire human race.” —Bavink, pg. 10

2. The Implications for Our Families: Our Age presents the same sinister lies found in the Garden, combined with thousands of years of Satanic sowing to bring about the near-demise of the family. We are observing the erosion of what is good and the attempted replacement with what is absurd.

- Dangerous Ideas
 - Feminism harms the family
 - The I-World harms the family
 - Autonomous desires harm the family
- Dangerous Distractions
 - The pressures of pastoral ministry
 - Technology and Social Media
- Dangerous Desires
 - Ease in the home
 - Approval of my Spouse
 - Approval of my Children

3. The Implications for our Churches: Discern where the battle is fought and what truths are needed.

C. The Redeemed Family: The Family that knows the grace of Christ is a showcase of His redeeming power.

1. Exploring further the OT
 - The Patriarchs and 12 Tribes

- Psalms 78, 127 and 128; Proverbs
- “The most extraordinary thing in the world is an ordinary man and his ordinary wife and their ordinary children.” —G. K. Chesterton

2. In Christ, the gospel brings true change (personal) and establishes God's family (corporate).
3. What we learn from the NT is that the family priorities of authority, obedience, and love continue and now reflect the New Covenant understanding on the nature of God and the gospel. (esp. Eph. 5.22-6.4)
4. The Implications for our Families: Our Savior loves the family (including your family!) and works redemptively, by grace, within and through the family.
5. The Implications for our Churches: Pastors must teach and labor to esteem the family as a place for the nurture of souls, the development of relationships, and the cultivation of gospel-understanding. The family serves to strengthen the local church and echoes the wisdom and goodness of God in the Church.

III. What God Intends for the Family

A. A Home infused with Revelation

1. Structured Times Discussing God's Word
2. Spontaneous Times Discussing God's Word

B. A Home enlivened with Relationships

1. Dad's present and convictional leadership
2. Mom's nurturing and convictional life

3. From small-talk to the ongoing-conversation: Show them God and what pleases him. Develop their respect for authority, train their consciences, help them discern their hearts and sin, thrill their senses/imagination with the glories of the Triune God.

C. A Family within God's greater Family

1. In the Church, singleness, marriage, parenting, grandparenting are all esteemed.

"Models of good marriages are like books in clothes...the local church is our library."—John Ensor

2. The Church is still, as Spurgeon says, "the dearest place on earth."

IV. Conclusion

We are flawed families living in the midst of a fallen and pain-riddled world. But God's vision for the family remains glorious, unwavering, and undiminished. Our families that know experientially the grace of Christ, and serve to showcase the glory, power, and wisdom of his redeeming love and wise design.