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MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

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One of the biggest cultural myths in modern America is that the individual is the foundational building block of society. This, however, is fundamentally incorrect; erroneously begotten from a philosophy that elevates the will of man to a higher place than where God's word commands. **In fact, the fundamental building block of society is the family.**

"Society," as we know it, could never even exist if the individual were its foundation. At the dawn of creation, God said it is "not good for [Adam] to be alone."¹ Thus, he made Eve, from whom came the ancestors of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. No society would exist but for the union of Adam and Eve. In other words, "society" exists because humans are instinctively fruitful within the bonds of marriage, creating family; we multiply, just as God commanded us in Genesis 1.² **Without family as a culture's foundation, there can be no society.**

For thousands of years, philosophers have affirmed the truth of Scripture, including those without an expressly Christian background. For instance, the Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that a "[society](#)" was not simply an aggregate of individuals. Rather, Aristotle viewed "society" like an organism, a thing unified into a whole for the common good and flourishing of all who are part of the whole. Aristotle's view isn't an esoteric understanding; it's grounded in basic logic. **It is rooted in the principle that one should never "[miss the forest for the trees.](#)"**

Given that society cannot exist without family as its foundation, Christians must confront a question that is highly controversial in modern America, but remains profoundly important: What is "family"?

Family, like all things created by God, is given a design by its Creator. God does not view humans as pets or puppets; the Bible tells us that we are *his children, his family*. The apostle John communicates this clearly: "But to all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."³ By the finished work of the cross, our Father in Heaven sees us just like His one and only Son Jesus Christ.

If Christians are called "children of God," thus grafted into God's family, then inherent to God's design for "family" is its procreative feature. Procreation, in the biblical context, follows the union between husband and wife in marriage; and the essence of that relationship on earth is no different in its spiritual context. The apostle Paul explains this truth in his letter to the Ephesians.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might

¹ Genesis 2: 18

² Genesis 1: 27-28

³ John 1: 12-13



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present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. *In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.* He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.⁴

Too often, actors hostile to Christianity invoke this verse to accuse the Church of upholding a “patriarchal” or “sexist” belief system which subordinates women to men. This could not be a more incorrect interpretation of Paul’s analogy likening the relationship between a husband and a wife to Christ and His church.

In Ephesians, the Bible describes the Church in two ways with respect to marriage: (1) The bride to the Lord Jesus Christ and (2) “*the body*” of Christ.⁵ The love Christ shows His bride, the Church, is how He treats “His body.” It is a manner of love that transcends even the golden rule. Not only does Christ treat us as we ought to be treated; He treats us better than we deserve; He shows His faithful Church a love that befits Himself. That is why the book of Revelation describes the faithful as follows: “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.” Those faithful to Christ, as part of “his body” and bride, rule with Him in Heaven.

In 1 Corinthians 6:17, Paul makes this point in another way: “But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.” The faithful Church, as the bride to the perfect Lamb of God, becomes one spirit with the Lord Jesus Christ because He grants them the right to rule with Him. **By the finished work of the cross, Christ will restore His created order so that He will rule with his family.**

Just as Christ and His Church become one in spirit, a husband and wife become one flesh:

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become *one flesh*. So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.⁶

The marital union between husband and wife is the basis for the family because of its procreative capacity, both materially and spiritually.

Today, America’s cultural elites attempt to redefine marriage, and the family by extension, with a vacuous tautology: “love is love.” This tautology can be applied to justify nearly anything depending on the context in which the statement is made; to “love” pancakes or to “love” reading classical literature is not the same as to “love” your spouse. The first two denote satisfaction.

⁴ See Ephesians 5: 22-33.

⁵ See Ephesians 1: 22-23.

⁶ Matthew 19: 5-6



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Pancakes satisfy our hunger as a base appetite; reading classical literature satisfies a higher hunger for knowledge as a good.

Loving your spouse, unlike loving food or literature, is to provide and care for the other regardless of your appetites or desires. To love your spouse is to subordinate your own desires, whether they be rooted in base or higher appetites, for their well-being. This love is deeply sacrificial. **Even when love is properly understood in this way, it is still not sufficient to constitute “marriage.”** A mother, for instance, can “love” her sister, brother, or child in the fullest sense of “love.” But it would corrode the unique composition of the family to suggest that this love single-handedly justifies a marriage between any one of them. **Love is necessary, but not sufficient for marriage.**

The whole of society rests upon the building block of family, and family begins with marriage. **God’s design for marriage is inextricably linked to its spiritual and material procreative capacity between man and a woman.** Even when a wife and husband cannot themselves procreate, their union remains the basis for the growth of God’s family. While adopting children and loving one another as Christ loves His Church, the two can grow God’s family.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon bemoans that the fruits of his labor have no real permanence, leaving no lasting legacy. As such, Solomon expresses a profound but harrowing realization about the responsibility of parents. He questioned, how are we to cultivate the world successfully from one generation to the next if all the work we do must be “[left] to the man who comes after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool?” The answer: the direction our children go will determine the direction of the world.

This deepens the profound responsibility of the parent and the role of the family. Parents can foster a home that’s like the first garden, where a weak Adam failed to protect his family and a deceived Eve allowed worldly lies to poison her mind and the mind of her family. But parents can also craft a home as God intended it to be—an outpost of God’s kingdom, where the family worships God together and children are cultivated by attentive parents to become like “tree[s] planted by streams of water, that [yield] fruit in its season” (Psa. 1:3).

No good can be created in isolation; we are designed by God as social beings. We are best nurtured in the confines of a loving family. From there, society can be built and can flourish.

