



CHAPTER 10

The Family

Even before there was sin, there was the concept of family. God had a great plan for man and woman and the first family on earth. Placed in a sinless environment created by God, Adam and Eve had everything they needed, and God gave them authority over all His creation. God blessed them. In Genesis 1 we read,

God said, "Let Us make man in Our image according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (vv. 26–28)

God gave mankind the commission to bear the Trinitarian image of God—"Us" refers to the triune God (Father, Son, and Spirit)—as He created humanity (body, soul, and spirit) to

mirror Him. Then He established them in the divine institution called family (father, mother, child) to reproduce His image.

Therefore, the goal of people in general, and the family in particular, is to mirror God in the visible realm predicated on His reality in the invisible. The family is to be the visible photograph and representation of God Himself. And so God blessed Adam and Eve with love, telling them to "be fruitful . . . and fill the earth, and subdue it." He blessed them with children (Gen. 1:28; 4:1-2). Sin by the first couple and the first family (Gen. 3:1-13, 16-19; 4:1-12) would alienate mankind until a Redeemer would rescue them from the grip of sin and Satan, the tempter.

THE KINGDOM FAMILY

A kingdom disciple is one who surrenders every area of life to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Today a kingdom family does the same. Thanks to the coming Redeemer promised in Genesis 3:15 and the Holy Spirit whom Jesus would send after His ascension, spouses and families can model the kingdom on earth. As families surrender their lives to Christ—jointly in their husband/wife and parent/child relationships toward each other and in their choices as individuals within the family unit—they can operate under divine authority, bringing honor to God.

Simply put, the family's mission is to replicate the image of God by reflecting His Son, Jesus Christ, in history and carrying out God the Father's divinely mandated dominion to "let them rule" (Gen. 1:26). Personal and familial happiness is to be a benefit of a strong family, but it's not the mission. The mission is the reflection and representation of God through the advancement

of His kingdom and rule on earth. Happiness becomes the natural benefit when this goal is being realized.

The problem today is that we have transposed the benefit with the goal, so when the benefit—happiness—is not working out we quit and move on. Remember, happiness is never God's first concern. Rather, happiness and satisfaction are to be a natural outgrowth of fulfilling God's first concern: advancing His kingdom. When we make His first concern our first concern, we will experience the benefits. But if we focus on the benefit of happiness without getting back to the purpose, we may wind up losing both the purpose and the benefit.

Family was established to be God's foundational representative institution in society and provides the framework to collectively carry out the plan of God in history. In particular, that plan includes the replication of God's image through Jesus Christ and the implementation of His rule, or *dominion*, on earth. *Dominion* simply means ruling on God's behalf in history so that history comes under God's authority. And it would be through the establishment and replication of the family that would serve as the foundation for the advancement of God's kingdom rule in society.

THE DOMINION OF THE FAMILY

In review, the *dominion covenant*, first stated in Genesis 1:26, means God is delegating to mankind the full responsibility for managing His earthly creation. In letting mankind exercise direct dominion, He has placed an agent on earth to serve as His representative to carry out His desires in history.

God, who grants us the authority to rule, also grants the freedom and responsibility to rule on His behalf as owner. But

what He does not do is *force* us to rule. He says, "Let them rule." He does not say He is going to make us rule.

What that means is that you can have a happy family or a miserable family depending on whether or not you are exercising your rule in reflection of God's image. God isn't going to make you rule. He isn't going to make you have a productive and fulfilling home. He sets up the fundamentals of the family, and gives you the option of utilizing them.

God grants us the freedom to rule. But He does not force us to rule.

Often the well-being of the home is determined by whether the husband is reflecting Christ in his role, or the wife is reflecting Christ in hers. Once that mirror gets broken, the reflection that

is supposed to happen in the relationship gets broken with it. Virtually every time there is a family breakdown, it is because

one or both parties are functioning outside of the covenantal bonds of marriage. (For more on marriage as a covenant, see the section "God's Description of Marriage.") They are failing to actualize the rulership God has given to them.

Satan tries to subvert our God-given authority by having us either (1) relinquish our rule by handing it over to him through deceiving us into believing he has authority, or (2) rule poorly based on our own judgments and distorted worldviews. It isn't until we rule with surrender to the comprehensive rule of God that we will become the rulers he intended. It is then that we enter into the complete realization of the divine design for a family under God.

THE LORD GOD: MASTER AND RULER

In Genesis 2 the narrative moves from the general creation to the specific creation of humanity, beginning with Adam. We read, "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (v. 7).

Why is this important? Because the word *LORD* (in small caps) references the covenant name of God, which is *Yahweh*. *Yahweh* literally translates into "master, and absolute ruler." When God introduces Himself to Adam relationally in the garden, and when He introduces Himself to us relationally through Scripture, He uses the term "LORD God." In all other references in these chapters that are not linked with man, God refers to Himself as *Elohim*, meaning Creator.

Clearly God is establishing the absolute and authoritative nature of His relationship with mankind through the revelation of His character and name. In fact, we know this is His objective because it is the first thing that Satan sought to undo when speaking with Eve later on in chapter 3 of Genesis.

It's significant that Satan did not refer to God as *Yahweh* (LORD God). He removed the name "LORD" and said, "Indeed, has God said . . . ?" (Gen. 3:1). Satan sought to strip God of His relationship with man as absolute ruler and authority by ignoring His name that connoted His relational position. As a result, Satan kept the idea of religion (God) while eliminating the order of authority (under God).

Religion without God as absolute ruler and authority is no threat to Satan. Life with the idea of God is much different than life under God. Life under God is kingdom discipleship. Life

that seeks its own decisions and will apart from God is religion. In fact, Satan often uses organized religion to keep people from the one, true God. Ritual that is not predicated on an authoritative nature of relationship between God and mankind is simply legalism and is the fastest track away from God's purposes of dominion than any other (see Eve's deception in Genesis 3).

Before any family was established, authority was established. Authority is the key component to living as a kingdom disciple and experiencing the manifold abundance Christ came to offer you. In fact, in the very midst of forming the foundation of the family, God reinforced that foundation as being under His own rightful authority. The primary element that everything else rests upon in a kingdom is the authority of the ruler. Without the proper establishment of and adherence to a ruler, anarchy ensues.

THE FOUNDATION OF AUTHORITY BEGINS BEFORE WE MARRY

Before the concept of family ever got introduced, Adam was single. Before any family comes together and is created on earth through a marriage, both individuals are single. One of the areas we often fail to focus on in building strong families is in building strong singles. A strong single will contribute to a strong family.

You may be reading this as a single (or single-again) person. This can be the time to let God prepare you for marriage. Before we ever get family right, we need to get singlehood right. A kingdom single is an unmarried person who undistractedly prioritizes their divine calling for the advancement of God's kingdom. What an opportunity!

The name *Adam* refers to that "which comes from the ground."

God made man from the very ground that he came from and the very ground he was appointed to oversee—the place where his managerial responsibilities were to be carried out.

In order for Adam to live as a successful single, his dual frame of reference was to recognize that (1) the very ground from which he was created he was appointed to oversee and (2) he needed humility to live life under the leadership of the Lord God. As long as he kept that mindset and functioned according to that truth, he would have the tools to make productive decisions.

What Adam needed to learn before God merged him into a family was that he was to be an overseer. God gave him a job (Gen. 2:15). Adam's job also offers

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some wisdom for single women. Women, when you consider a man for marriage, remember that before God gave Adam a wife, God gave him responsibility. It's clear from these events that God wants a man—and husband—to work and to be responsible. That shows us that an irresponsible man, no matter how attractive or how smooth he can talk, is not a good choice for marriage. Marriage won't make him a responsible provider and leader. God wants the best for each of His daughters. Consider your choice of a mate carefully, and follow God's standard by marrying only a man who demonstrates while he is single that he can and will take care of you in marriage.

In addition to his responsibility, though, God also gave him

freedom. Adam could enjoy all the fruit of the garden, with one exception: the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (vv. 16–17). The second lesson, based on verses 16 and 17, indicates why so many marriages and families dissolve. God gave Adam work to do in the garden, and with those instructions He prepared Adam to live there. God gave only one limitation: “From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die” (Gen. 2:17). That conversation with Adam points us to the weakness in most homes: most husbands don’t know what God has said—or they alter what God has said when applying it to their own lives and relationships.

Here is the second lesson for single men and women: if your personal foundation (humility before God and an accurate understanding and application of God’s Word) is not solid before creating a new family through marriage and children, your family’s foundation will not be solid either. Operating as a single kingdom disciple under the divine rule of the Lord God is the fundamental key to laying the foundation for family.

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF A BLESSING

If you are already married and were not living as a kingdom disciple prior to establishing your family, or if your mate was not, then the first place to start is focusing on what it means to be a kingdom disciple. It’s never too late to align your thoughts, words, and actions underneath God’s overarching rule. Start with yourself, pray for your spouse, and then seek to implement discipleship principles within your home. When you do, you will receive God’s abundant blessings as promised in His Word.

Pray for others in your family as well, that your children may become kingdom disciples.

Keep in mind, though, God never blesses just to bless. There is always a reason, a purpose, for His provision. Notice the order in the following verse relating to the purpose of the establishment of the family. It says: “*God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth’*” (Gen. 1:28, emphasis added).

First, it would help to define a blessing. A blessing is *the capacity to experience, enjoy, and extend the goodness of God in your life*. It is never just about you. While it includes you, it is also intended to extend through you to others somehow. Too many Christians today want God to bless them without being willing for God to bless others through them.

When God established the family in the garden, He told them to be fruitful and multiply. He blessed them. Then He enabled them to extend the blessing He had given them throughout the land, and to those who came after them. In addition, God also blessed them through providing them with what they needed to carry out the rule He had given to them.

A blessing is when God provides all that is needed for you to accomplish all there is under your influence in life.

Second, note that after the blessing came the instructions. God blessed, but then followed that up with the commission of Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and to rule over that which He had placed under them. They were to serve as managers over the garden that had been given to them.

One of the worst things is to live your life while neglecting

your garden of purpose, productivity, and divine destiny, both as individuals and as a family. The true tragedy is to miss out on managing, or even to mismanage, the sphere of responsibility God has prepared for you and your family.

GOD'S DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

In Malachi 2, God complained that His people had wandered from Him. They had taken a detour from God's intended destination for them. Their wandering showed in many ways, including how they treated their marriages. God got specific:

This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. (vv. 13-14)

Notice the final word. God specifically describes the marriage union as a "covenant." The term "covenant" used to be regularly attached to the concept of marriage, which is the foundation for family. In fact, a kingdom marriage is defined as a covenantal union between a man and a woman who commit themselves to functioning in unity under divine authority in order to replicate God's image and expand His rule in the world through both their individual and joint callings. This union is to be the foundation for building kingdom families. However, the word has been forgotten by Christians in our contemporary language today, even though it is the biblical description of marriage used throughout Scripture.

The problems in our homes come when we don't recognize that marriage is a covenant. Among those who do, many simply don't know what a covenant entails. When we do not know what a covenant is, then we do not know what we are supposed to have, develop, or protect over time. It's like trying to hit a bull's-eye without a target.

A covenant is more than a formal contractual arrangement. Biblically, *a covenant is a spiritual and relational bond between God and a person, or people, inclusive of certain agreements, conditions, benefits, and effects.*

Whenever God wanted to formalize His relationship with His people, He established a covenant. There are a number of these agreements in Scripture such as the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the new covenant. As we saw in an earlier chapter, these are formal arrangements that are spiritually binding in a legal capacity between God and a person, or people. It is through covenants that God administers His kingdom programs.

Marriage is another covenant that God has established. As such, the marriage covenant can never operate to its fullest potential without the ongoing involvement of God. Biblical, spiritual, and theological covenants assume God's integration into every aspect of the relationship in order for that covenant to maximize its purpose.

When the practical realities of God are dismissed from the marital covenantal relationship, it becomes an invitation to the devil to create havoc in the home. This happens because there has been a departure from God's overarching transcendence.

THE SPIRITUAL CONNECTION IN MARRIAGE

One of the facets of a covenant, which I just mentioned, is a big theological word called *transcendence*. Transcendence simply means that God is in charge—a concept we are approaching from many different angles in this book because it is so critical to living as a kingdom disciple. Covenants are both initiated and ruled by God.

Transcendence is a key principle in the marriage covenant, as well as in laying a healthy foundation for a family. For a covenant to function successfully, carrying with it the benefits, security, and authority, it has to be set up according to God's expectations and regulations.

Until we recognize the covenantal aspect of transcendence in our families—that God instituted marriage and is therefore in charge, meaning that His viewpoint must be our viewpoint—we will never experience the productive, purposeful, and peaceful relationship we were designed to have. We will miss out on the connections made in the spiritual realm.

Marriage is a covenantal agreement created to improve the ability of each partner to carry out on earth what God has designated in heaven as well as for the parties to rule together on God's behalf as one.

Since God is ultimately in charge of the covenant of marriage, the first place to look to gain insight into the makings of a purposeful marriage is God's perspective on marriage.

Most people learn about marriage from an illegitimate source. They learn about marriage from the television, their friends, or the home that they grew up in. If you grew up in a functioning home, then that would be fine. But many did not, so the home—

along with the media and friends—often merge together to form a distorted perspective on the covenant of marriage.

The devil is often behind this distorted perspective that results in the chaos we experience in our marriages, and in our lives. His goal is to destroy the family and the kingdom rule it was designed to have. I know that we fuss and sometimes fight as couples and we think that it is the other person who is the problem. But that's exactly what the devil wants. He wants you to believe that it's the other person who is the problem.

He wants you to believe that because he knows that you will never fix the real problem when the person you are fighting is not the real problem. The problem is a spiritual one brought on by our own sinful natures or by a rebellious and clever enemy of God.

Much of what we fight about as couples has to do with the consequences of our own choices as well as the demonic realm working against us. "One little thing" can easily turn into a conflict that puts a couple on the path to the divorce court. It can do that because it's not the one little thing. It is the breaking of the marriage covenant either through a lack of submission to the transcendent God or a breaking of the covenantal rules of love and respect. If members of a family simply abided by the overarching principles of love and respect, they would not face the myriad of issues that plague homes today. All issues can be traced back to these two rules.

Couples, if we cannot grasp the seriousness of making a spiritual connection in everything that goes on in our marriages, we will continue to rant and rave about the issue at hand. We will continue to focus on the thing that is happening without realizing that we must align ourselves under the fundamentals

of a covenant in order to be in a position to receive the blessings that God has promised. Failure to do so hinders our prayers. In contrast, spiritual unity under God brings His blessing.

Family counseling that offers advice on relational strategies is good, and I recommend it when marriages have reached an impasse in communication. But to reverse the effects of negative consequences in your home and lives, and to evoke a blessing in your sphere of family, you will need more than that. You will need to address the spiritual foundation of your family. And this spiritual foundation can only be addressed spiritually by living as fully committed kingdom disciples.

If you want your family to experience God's purpose and blessings, you must function in accordance with the covenant. You must build your home on the foundation of God's Word. The family is a divine institution and as such will flourish when aligned under the kingdom rule of God. The slogan of every kingdom family should be the words of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

SATAN'S CONTINUED EFFORT TO DISMANTLE FAMILIES

Seeking to dismantle and destroy the foundations of families is nothing new to Satan. His goal began with the first family of Adam and Eve, but it has since moved to all other families on the planet. In dismantling families, he seeks to thwart the expansion of God's kingdom on earth as well as the replication of God's image in history through His disciples.

Satan's strategy began by coaxing mankind to willingly remove themselves from under God's rule. When Eve ate of the fruit, and Adam willingly ate as well, Satan got them to oper-

ate according to their own rule, and under their own authority. Adam and Eve disregarded God's authority, along with His instruction, thus inviting havoc into the home. One small action created lifetimes of pain and consequence. That's how important obedience and submission under the lordship of Jesus Christ really is.

When Satan got Adam and Eve to function outside God's prescribed alignment with Him, the tempter also got them to function out from under God's prescribed alignment for them with each other. Eve became the leader while Adam became the passive responder, not to mention that he then proceeded to blame Eve for what was ultimately a lack of leadership on his part. In fact, Adam is held accountable for allowing his love for his wife to overrule his love and commitment to God (Gen. 3:17).

The result was that both shame and conflict entered into the marriage. Not only that, but nature itself began to feel the effect of sin on the world and disintegrated as a result of the curse of the ground. Ultimately, sibling rivalry in the first family led to murder, which then perpetuated itself in dysfunctional relationships among even more families, causing the entire human race to be destroyed, except for Noah and his family (Gen. 6).

It is only as kingdom men and women function in their divinely ordained roles under God's rule, establishing kingdom families, that will we see kingdom authority operating in the world for the stability of society.

GOD'S DIVINE USE OF THE FAMILY

When the entire world had become corrupted and it was destroyed in the great flood, God chose to start the re-creation of the world's population through the institution of the family. In

this case, it wasn't Adam and Eve; rather, it was Noah. Noah's three sons became the basis for the restoration of civilization.

When God wanted to build His own nation and raise up a people who were holy and set apart for Him, He started this through the divine institution of the family. He chose Abraham, along with Abraham's wife, Sarah, as the vessel through which to create an entire nation. In fact, God's intentions for blessing the entire world came through Abraham and the seed of his family.

We read in Genesis 18, "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18:18–19 NIV, emphasis added).

Notice that God validated the importance of family to Abraham when He said that His promises to him related to nation-building were directly tied to Abraham's influence on his own children. Abraham's greatness as the father of a nation didn't simply come by virtue of who he was. God instructed Abraham to train his children, along with his entire household, to live their lives under God, essentially as disciples. This is because the saga of a nation is the saga of its families written large.

God so values the family that He would regularly remind His nation that it was built on family when He would speak about His plan in history to them because He would regularly communicate it in terms of family. He would refer to Himself in familial descriptions, such as, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Likewise, when God expanded His kingdom in the New

Testament through the church, He would regularly do it with family terminology as well such as "household of faith," "brothers," "sisters," etc. The family motif for the advancement of His kingdom appears throughout Scripture.

And when God chose to redeem the entire world through the sacrifice of His own Son on the cross, He placed Jesus into the context of a family on earth—to be raised, learn, and grow in both wisdom and stature before laying down His life as our Savior. Now just as God redeemed the first marriage through the sacrifice of an animal and the covering of their nakedness with the animal skin, through redemption in Jesus Christ families can be restored today when the members who make up the family choose to align themselves under God as His kingdom disciples.

As we maintain the foundation of the family through kingdom husbands and wives raising kingdom families under the lordship of Jesus Christ, we will see the expansion of God's kingdom. We will leave legacies in the lives of our children and grandchildren that last forever.