

Building the Foundation of the Christian Family

By Mike Lorence

Research Regarding the Christian Family Today

Barna Research Group, a market research firm specializing in studying the religious beliefs and behavior of Americans, and the intersection of faith and culture, has found that 34% of Christian marriages end in divorce.¹

Interestingly, in a follow-up study conducted by Shaunti Feldhahn and George Barna, found that “that people who keep God at the center of their home and family stay married at far greater rates, and even thrive within those marriages. One of the reasons for this is that those whose first commitment is to the lordship of Jesus put fewer expectations upon their spouses to meet emotional needs that only God can meet.”²

In addition, “two studies conducted by both the Barna Group and USA Today found that nearly 75 percent of Christian young people fall away from the faith and leave the church after high school. One of the key reasons they do so is intellectual skepticism. Not only are most youth not being well-grounded in the faith, but they’re also not being taught to intelligently examine the views of skeptics who will inevitably challenge their faith.”³

The article goes on to state that a key factor in a child’s life in maintaining their faith is the influence of the parents. “One particular study found that when **BOTH** parents were faithful and active in the church, 93 percent of their children remained faithful. When just **ONE** parent was faithful, 73 percent of their children remained faithful. When **NEITHER** parent was particularly active in church, only 53 percent of their children stayed faithful. In those instances where neither parent was active at all and **ONLY ATTENDED CHURCH NOW AND THEN**, the percentage dropped to a mere 6 percent.”⁴ (Emphasis added.)

Overall, the statistics today are not very good for Christian families. However, the good news in these studies showed that when Christians stood faithfully together as a couple and as parents, the success rates dramatically increased. No surprise there, since God designed both marriage and the family as part of His design for man. When we live according to His Word, we see the benefits.

Today, I want to look at building the foundation of the Christian family. This is not intended to be an in-depth study but an overview of the critical elements required to build a solid base for any Christian relationship, including our relationships in the Family of God, as well as those of marriage and of families. The bedrock for each one of these relationships is the same. The application may vary in the different relationships, but the godly principles on which it is based will remain steadfast and sure.

¹ Barna Research Group, Ltd. (2004, September 4). *Born Again Christians Just As Likely to Divorce As Are Non-Christians*. Retrieved September 9, 2023, from Barna: <https://www.barna.com/research/born-again-christians-just-as-likely-to-divorce-as-are-non-christians/>.

² Got Questions Ministries. (Page last updated on: 2023, April 14). *Is the divorce rate among Christians truly the same as among non-Christian?* Retrieved September 9, 2023, from Got Questions: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-divorce-rate.html>.

³ Got Questions? (This page last updated: 2022, January 4). *Why are so many young people falling away from the faith?* Retrieved September 9, 2023, from Got Questions: <https://www.gotquestions.org/falling-away.html>.

⁴ (Got Questions?, This page last updated: 2022).

God Designed the Family

God instituted the concept of marriage between a man and woman in Genesis when He talked of the two becoming “one flesh.”⁵ He tells Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply.”⁶ In other words, to have children and raise a family. This was God’s plan from the very beginning.

God’s desire was also to have a family of His own. We’ve heard it said before, “Christianity is not a religion; it is a family, a Father and His children.”⁷ As our Father, He wants the best for us within our own families. Within His Word He has provided the necessary means for us to achieve it.

Setting the Cornerstone

In laying the foundation for the Christian family, it’s important to make sure that we first have the cornerstone in its proper place, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:19- (KJV)

¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

²⁰ And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

²¹ In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

²² In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

First and foremost, we must place Jesus in his proper place as lord and savior, both in our heart and in our actions. Without him being in his rightful position as the cornerstone you’ll be building a structure that’s out of alignment and the foundation will be unstable.

Once the cornerstone has been set, we can begin to build the foundation. It starts in the Book of Romans.

Laying the Footings of the Foundation

Romans lays the footings of the foundation for any Christian. What do I mean by “footings of the foundation?” According to Stronghold Engineering, “The bottom part of a foundation is called the footing. Footings in construction are critical, as the footing distributes the weight of the building evenly across the entire structure so that it doesn’t sink into the ground.”⁸ We must get our footing set correctly from the doctrine and practices laid out in the Book of Romans. Otherwise, our foundation and the structure we build upon it will eventually sink.

⁵ Genesis 2:24 (KJV) - Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

⁶ Genesis 1:28 (KJV) - And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

⁷ Kenyon, E. W. (1964). *The Father and His Family: The Story of Man's Redemption* (Fourteenth ed.). Linwood, Washington, U.S.A.: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society. p.11.

⁸ Stronghold Engineering, Inc. (2022, August 3). *What Are Footings in Construction?* Retrieved September 9, 2023, from Stronghold Engineering, Inc.: <https://www.strongholdengineering.com/what-are-footings-in-construction/>.

Remember the parable of the wise man and the foolish man. The wise man builds his house upon the rock and the foolish man upon the sand (no foundation).⁹ Let's be wise builders.

It is the first of the doctrinal epistles written to the Church. "The book of Romans stands as the cornerstone and the foundation of all Christian believing and education. God had the book of Romans placed first in all the Church Epistles because it is the foundation, the basic steppingstone, the threshold of all true Church of the Body teaching."¹⁰ Today we'll just do a quick overview of Romans.

In the first eight chapters of Romans, it begins with man at his lowest state and takes him to where nothing can separate him from the love of God. That he was a sinner but made to be a joint-heir with Christ. From our deserved condemnation of God to being justified. We were declared dead to where we're raised together with Christ.

The practical side of Romans begins in chapter 12. We'll look at the first two verses in the Amplified Version.

Romans 12:1-2 (AMP)

¹ Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [dedicating all of yourselves, set apart] as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, *which is* your rational (logical, intelligent) act of worship.

² And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed *and* progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you].

We are to present our whole and complete selves to God and we are to transform ourselves by renewing our minds. This must be the mindset we take for every commandment of God to build a solid and strong spiritual foundation for our Christian lives.

When building a foundation, every stone is important. Can you imagine building a massive structure when only some of the stones are in good shape? It's the same with our lives. Every action we take in our lives is one of the stones of our foundation. We continue building upon them throughout our whole lives. These foundation stones are vital in building our relationships within the Family of God, in our marriages, and with our children. You can't shortcut the process.

Romans continues to tell us that we are part of the one Body and each member must do their part and not be a stumbling block to other believers. Now we come to Ephesians. Ephesians now takes us to a different level. To really live the Book of Ephesians you must first be living the

⁹ Matthew 7:24-27 (KJV) – Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

¹⁰ Unknown. (Date unknown). *Romans: V.P. Wierwille*. An undocumented transcript of The Way Corps teachings of Victor Paul Wierwille done in 1973 and 1978, PDF format.

doctrines you've learned in Romans by putting them into practice. The footings have been laid, now it's time to build the foundation.

Building the Foundation

Ephesians lays out the details of what it takes to build a successful Christian family, whether it be the Family of God, a marriage, or a family. Let's take a closer look.

The first three chapters of Ephesians states that we're blessed with every spiritual blessing, we've been enlightened, raised up together and seated together in the heavenlies, made His workmanship (masterpiece), made nigh by the blood of Christ, and we are builded together for a habitation of God. In addition, He made known unto us the mystery of Christ, and that we would be strengthened with might by His Spirit, that Christ would dwell in our hearts, and that we'd be rooted and grounded in love, knowing the love of Christ, and be filled with all the fullness of God.

WHEW! I must stop and take a breath after all of that. That is sure on a different plane than what we read in Romans. The final three chapters of Ephesians lay out the rest of what is needed to build a solid, strong foundation for our Christian family.

Ephesians 4:1 (KJV)

¹ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Paul is saying that each one of us now needs to walk worthy. The word worthy means "suitably in a manner of equal value with *the thing referred to*."¹¹ What is the thing referred to? It is the vocation or calling that we were called to. It's a high calling so we need to live our lives according to that calling. From this point in Ephesians, we are told how to walk worthy. Let's see what it says.

Ephesians 4:3-6 (KJV)

³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

⁴ There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

⁶ One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

To keep peace in the Body, we need to be in agreement regarding these seven key areas:

1. One body
2. One spirit
3. One hope
4. One Lord
5. One faith
6. One baptism, referring to being baptized in holy spirit
7. One God and Father

There may be areas as believers on which we may not always agree. And the Word tells us to be forgiving on the insignificant matters¹² but these are not insignificant. If we are to build a strong

¹¹ Bullinger, E. (1976). Worthy. A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

¹² Philippians 4:5 (KJV) - Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

relationship with others, then we can't disagree on these seven areas. Again, we're laying more stones on our foundation for the Christian family.

Look at these verses in Ephesians. Talk about having a firm foundation on which to build.

Ephesians 4:14-15 (KJV)

¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

We must not be like little children who will believe anything they're told, but we need to grow up so we are building our beliefs and practices on the truth of God's Word. We speak the truth. How? In love. What a huge impact speaking the truth IN LOVE has on any relationship? This stone in our foundation only strengthens and reinforces our base to build upon. Let's be like the wise man whose house was built upon solid footing, so when the winds of doctrine beat upon it, it will stand firm.

Ephesians 4:22-32 (KJV)

²² That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

²³ And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

²⁴ And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

²⁵ Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

²⁶ Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

²⁷ Neither give place to the devil.

²⁸ Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Here we have a whole section of important things we need to do. Let's stop and identify each one.

1. Put off the old man, renew our mind (Romans 12:2), and put on the new man
2. Put away lying but speak truth with one another (Ephesians 4:15)
3. When angry, don't sin by letting the day end still being angry thereby giving place to the devil
4. Don't steal but labor so you have to give
5. Don't speak words that corrupt, or bring into a worse state, but speak words that edify or build up to a better state than it was in before

6. Let bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour (screaming), and evil speaking with malice be put away
7. Instead, be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another. The standard set for how we forgive is how God forgave us because of Christ.

Each one of these is vital part in building up the Body of Christ. Can you imagine if each one of us would live like this? How much better would all our relationships be?

What else does Ephesians have to tell us as we continue building?

Ephesians 5:1-2 (KJV)

- ¹ Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
- ² And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

We are to be followers of God. The word “followers” is the word that can be translated as “imitators.” Have you ever watched small children imitating something one of their parents is doing? Our grandson wanted to imitate his father, Bill, when Bill went to mow his mother’s yard. Aaron had a little toy lawnmower he could push around the yard so he could be just like Dad. We are to do that. Be just like our heavenly Dad. The following verses now tell us **EXACTLY** how to do just that.

We are to walk in love. God lays out the standard by which we are to love. As Christ sacrificed himself for us when we didn’t deserve it, that’s the way we are to walk in love towards others. It’s a high standard, but one that we can achieve if we really want to. Sure, it’s not always easy. It can be downright unpleasant at times. Yet Christ went through his torture and crucifixion, not because it was pleasant, but because of the joy that was before him.¹³ How much more could we walk in love towards one another if we saw the positive impact or joy, it would bring rather than focusing on how it might inconvenience us?

Ephesians 5:8-11 (KJV)

- ⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:
- ⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)
- ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.
- ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Next, we’re to walk as children of light, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord (Romans 12:2) and then we’ll manifest the fruit of the spirit. First, we walk in love, now we walk in light. We’re not to associate with the works of darkness which is unfruitful. In Galatians 5 we see the fruit of darkness and the contrasting fruit of the spirit.

Galatians 5:18-22 (KJV)

- ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
- ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

¹³ Hebrews 12:2-3 (KJV) - Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Fruit is what is produced. When we walk in light, we will produce fruit that is good and delicious. The fruit of darkness is bitter and choking to anyone around it. Imagine the impact that the fruit of the spirit has upon those who are in a relationship with you? Who doesn't want to take a big "bite" of peace, love, joy, and gentleness?

What else are we to put into our foundation?

Ephesians 5:15-17 (KJV)

¹⁵ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

¹⁶ Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

¹⁷ Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Now we are to walk circumspectly. Circumspectly means "going up to the top or summit; and requires great pains and care and diligence; accurate, exact, perfect."¹⁴ We need to be wise by having a clear, precise understanding God's will. And we don't waste time by doing anything that is contrary to God's will. The days are already evil to the point of trying to take us down the wrong path, so let's redeem the time by being exact and working our way to the top of the summit God has set before us.

We don't ever want to have to go back and repair our work when it could have been done right the first time. That's redeeming the time. When you don't do the will of God, you're putting stones on the foundation that are weak and unstable. They won't hold up over time. It's being the foolish man building on the sand. Sometimes we can go back and repair the problem but that's certainly not redeeming the time, is it? Become clear on God's will then do it. So how do we now walk circumspectly. One aspect of it is clearly laid out in the following verse.

Ephesians 5:21 (KJV)

²¹ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Here's another stone in our foundation. But God, I don't like this one. What did the verse above tell us about understanding what the will of the Lord is? Well, this is the will of the Lord. Submit is a verb in middle passive voice which means "I place myself under" or "I submit myself." You do it to yourself by your decision. It's a voluntary action. It is not where one is overlording another, but where we willingly place ourselves under the direction of another when it's appropriate. And we do this one with each other.

For example. In Faithful in Christ Ministries, we have a Senior Pastor, Charlie Quillen, who serves as the President of our Board of Directors. The other members of the Board submit to Charlie. He will tell you that it certainly doesn't mean that we just allow him to make every decision and run everything. It's by proper order and arrangement. Charlie leads the way with the support, counsel, and advice of his Board. At times, he may decide to delegate a

¹⁴ Bullinger, E. (1976). *Circumspectly. A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

responsibility to another individual. Now that person is leading, and Charlie will submit to their leadership. When done lovingly, it works very well.

Finally, we get to a section regarding marriage – wives and husbands. But look at ALL the foundation that had to be laid BEFORE God could even discuss the specific responsibilities of a wife, a husband, and children. ALL the footings and stones laid in place in Romans and Ephesians MUST be in place and solid BEFORE you can even consider being able to fulfill the responsibilities laid out for marriage or being a parent. It's certainly much more than just going to a fellowship, praying, and reading your Bible. If the foundation isn't in place, then the relationships within the Body of Christ, the marriage, and the family will all be on unstable settings. No wonder so many Christian marriages end in divorce, or they are less than what the couple was expecting. It's not surprising then those children raised in an unstable Christian environment stray from their upbringing.

Time doesn't permit me to go into detail regarding the responsibilities of the husband, the wife, or the child. I will only highlight them as they are listed within Ephesians 5:22 – 6:4.

Husband's responsibilities:

1. The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Ephesians 5:23
2. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. Ephesians 5:25
3. Men are to love their wives as their own bodies. Ephesians 5:28
4. Nourish. Ephesians 5:29
5. Cherish. Ephesians 5:29
6. Be one flesh (Member of his body). Ephesians 5:30
7. Leave his father and mother. Ephesians 5:31
8. Shall be joined unto his wife. Ephesians 5:31

Wife's responsibilities:

1. Submit yourselves unto your own husbands. Ephesians 5:22
2. Reverence her husband. Ephesians 5:33

Child's responsibility:

1. Obey your parents in the Lord. Ephesians 6:1

Ephesians goes on to cover the responsibilities of servants and their masters. Each of these are unique relationships. And each one also requires the same solid foundation to live them circumspectly.

The Capstone of our Structure

As we've seen in our brief study of what it takes to build a foundation for a vibrant and successful Christian family, it's more than just knowing the Word and going to fellowship. It takes putting in the footings to ensure stability, as we saw in Romans. In Ephesians we saw that we build the foundation upon those footings by walking in love, walking in light and walking circumspectly. Then once that's done, we can decide on the type of structure we want. We can be a wonderful single believer within the Body of Christ, doing our part. We can decide to join our lives with another believer and serve together in marriage. And we can expand our responsibilities by becoming parents and raising our children in the nurture and admonitions of the Lord.

But Ephesians doesn't end there. It places a capstone on our structure. "A capstone is a stone placed at the top of a pyramid or building, both signifying its completion and as protection for the walls below. Capstones were often considered the most important part of the building, and elaborately decorated to signify the culmination of the achievement."¹⁵ The following verses are how we maintain and protect all that we've labored so diligently to build in our lives. Any structure takes vigilance to maintain. We are given the tools necessary to do just that in the last verses of Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:10-18 (KJV)

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

¹⁵ And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

¹⁶ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

We now have the blueprint and the tools necessary to build a strong, solid foundation for the Christian family. Let's be vigilant in our efforts to continue building and maintaining it.

¹⁵ Parker, J. (2023, March 24). *What Is A Capstone In Architecture?* Retrieved September 10, 2023, from Architecture: <https://www.architecturemaker.com/what-is-a-capstone-in-architecture/>.