**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Families Are God’s Idea**

Today on our program I want to talk about families. I want to emphasize the fact that God instituted families. Families are God’s idea. That seems so basic, and yet it is so profound and has serious implications. You see, since families are God’s idea he must have given us a blueprint for what families should look like and how they should be arranged. And if families are God’s idea and He has given us a blueprint, what will happen if we don’t follow that blueprint? This is the focus of our lesson today.

First let’s emphasize the fact that families are God’s idea. Families are not our cultures idea. It wasn’t that a long time ago in this country that we decided that we need this family arrangement. Government officials didn’t sit down in some high level meetings and decide what will be the basic building block of our culture. They didn’t say “Let us make some laws and put families together.” And also families are not the product of some evolutionary process where down through time we tried different arrangements and then decided, at least for now, this is the one that works best for us. This is not where families came from. Instead, family is God’s arrangement, going all the way back to the beginning when God created the world.

Look with me in Genesis chapter two. After God made Adam from the dust of the ground it says in verse 18, *“And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’”* And so beginning with verse 21, *“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.”* Notice, it was God who saw that it was not good that man should be alone. It was God who said, “I will make him a helper comparable to him.” It was God who took a rib from his side, it was God who made it into a woman, and it was God who brought her to the man. And it was God who said in verse 24, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* It was God who established that first family.

Jesus verifies this. In Matthew 19:3, Jesus is asked the question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Jesus answers their question by going back to the beginning when God made them male and female. He said, *“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”* Here Jesus quotes from Genesis 1:27 and from Genesis 2:24. From these two statements Jesus draws two conclusions: number one – God is the one that joins husband and wife together. And number two: what God joins together man is not to separate. Jesus is telling us that God originated marriage. And so marriage is not an institution that originated with man, and therefore, he can tweak it and change it as he desires. No! Marriage is a God-ordained institution.

And God told the man and his wife in the beginning, *“Be fruitful and multiply…”* (Gen. 1:28) It is within marriage that children are to be born and raised. In Ephesians 6:1-3, children are told to obey their parents, and to honor father and mother. In verse 4 fathers are told to bring their children up in the training and admonition of the Lord. God ordained that husbands and wives have children, and train them in the ways of the Lord. You see, God originated family. This arrangement was not some social experiment of man, and if man doesn’t like it he can discard it for some other arrangement. No, This family arrangement is what God, our Creator established.

Let us take this a little further. God did not bring Adam and Eve together in marriage and then say, “Good luck, figure this out yourself. You are on you own, and whatever you decide will be ok with me.” But this is the view many people have in America. The idea is that we can build our family any way we want to – men and women sleeping around, living together outside of marriage; women raising children out of wedlock; no fault divorces; same-sex marriages; polygamy; etc. etc. We are told “no one way is right. Whatever family arrangement we choose will be ok.” But we need to understand that God made us, and He knows what is best for us. God’s family arrangement is for our good. God’s instructions to man have always been for man’s good. That was true under the Law of Moses. To the children of Israel, Moses said, *“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?”* (Deut. 10:12-13) The law God has given us today under Christ is for our good. Read 1 Peter 3:10-12. Following God’s laws concerning family is what is best for families and for society.

And secondly, we need to understand that the choices that we make have consequences. Let me illustrate it like this. You go a buy a bright shiny new car. In the glove compartment of that new car is the owners-manual. That owners-manual tells you how the car operates, and how you can keep that new car in good working order. Now, let me tell you something, no one imposes car values on you. You don’t have to read the manual. You don’t have to do anything it says. You don’t have to change the oil in your car. You don’t have to check the transmission fluid, or have the brakes checked when you hear a squeak. You don’t have to keep a watch on the depth of your tire treads. You don’t have to ever wash it. You can treat that car in whatever way you want to treat it. But, I guarantee you, if you don’t follow at least some of those instructions in the owners-manual, within a short time that brand new car is going to fall apart. It won’t work like you want it to work. You will destroy it. I’m just saying that this is true for families too. We don’t have to follow God’s manual for families. We have the choice whether we will follow God’s manual or not. No one imposes it on us. But I guarantee you that if we don’t follow God’s owners-manual for the family, we will destroy what God designed for man’s good. I think of a couples’ wedding day. It is such a joyous day. They are so excited. They celebrate their wedding with their families and friends and then set out on their honeymoon with joy in their hearts. It is a beautiful beginning, but I will tell you if they don’t follow God’s blueprint for families, it will end ugly.

Many in our society today are not following God’s blueprint for the family, and we are in deep trouble. Families are hurting, and our society is hurting because of it. Families are the building blocks of any culture. And if families don’t go well, neither does society go well. According to Pew Research Center, in an article written by Gretchen Livingston in December of 2014, only 46 percent of U.S. children under 18 are living with two married heterosexual parents in their first marriage. This is a marked change from 1960 when 73 percent of children fit this description. The articles says, “One of the largest shifts in family structure is this: 34 percent [that’s 1 in 3] of children today are living with an unmarried parent—up from just 9 percent in 1960.” And it says that “the share of children born outside of marriage now stands at 41 percent, up from just 5 percent in 1960.” Did you get that? Forty one percent of children today are born out of wedlock. A greater number of our children are growing up in single parent homes. Many other children must experience the devastation of their parents divorcing. Is that something we need to be concerned about? If family is not the work of God, but instead the creation of culture, or simply something that has just evolved over time, I guess it would be easy to shrug it off as something of no concern. But to say these changes in family structure is having no adverse effect on children and no adverse effect on our society is just being naïve. Studies have shown that children of failed marriages are more like to struggle with drugs, alcohol and sex. Judith Wallerstein’s *Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* talks about the long-term effect of divorce on children. She argued that adult children of failed marriages continue to suffer well into adulthood. Someone has written, “Without judging or moral­izing, the weight of the research shows that if it were an ideal world, children fare better in nurturing two­ parent families than do those in single-parent and step­ families.” ([www.ces.ncsu.edu](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu)) That is what we would expect. Following God’s plan for families is for our good, and disregarding His plan is to our hurt.

Consider with me God’s blueprint for families. First of all, in God’s blueprint for families, marriage is one man for one woman for life. God said, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,*[notice the singular] *and they shall become one flesh.”*(Gen. 2:24).  Paul said in 1 Cor. 7:2, *“Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.”* Even though in times past, God tolerated polygamy, it was not a part of God’s original plan for family, and is certainly not a part of God’s plan under the new covenant, the law of Christ.

Also according to God’s plan marriage is to be between a man and a woman, not between a man and a man, or a woman and a woman. As we have already read*, “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife* [or woman] *and they shall become one flesh.”* Homosexual relationships are clearly condemned in scripture.

And this husband-wife relationship is to be for life. Malachi 2:16 says that God hates divorce. As we read earlier, in response to the question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Jesus said, “*what God has joined together, let not man separate.”* Paul said in Romans 7:2, *“For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.”* Marriage is for life. There is one scriptural cause for divorce, and that is, one may divorce his mate for sexual immorality (Matt. 19:9). If your mate is guilty of sexual immorality then you have the scriptural right to divorce for that reason and remarry, but for no other reason. God intends for husband and wife to be committed to one another for life. He instructs them to love one another, to sacrifice for one another. When problems arise they act toward one another as love would act and seek solutions to their problems. Divorce is not a part of their vocabulary.

In God’s blueprint for families, children are born into this loving environment where mother loves father and father loves mother, and they both love God and their children, and they bring the children up in the training and admonition of the Lord. They teach their children to love, respect and honor God, to obey His laws. They teach their children to love their neighbors as themselves – to treat others as they would want to be treated. When you have a couple who are committed to one another, and who are both committed to God, and they train their children to do the same, you have a family that God designed, and a family arrangement that is good for any society.

Family is not the invention of culture, it is the product of God’s working. God gave us a blueprint for how it is to operate and we cannot ignore that without terrible consequences. Families matter. We need to value God’s blueprint for family. Build your family according to the original design, according to the Manufacturers specifications.

Our time is gone for today, but before we close, I want to announce a special series of meetings that will be conducted by the St. James church of Christ in St. James. Beginning next Sunday, Sept. 24 continuing through Friday night the 29th, Bruce Reeves from the Conway, Arkansas, will present lessons that will convict and encourage our hearts. Come and be with us. We will meet at our regular times on Sunday and 7:00 each evening Monday through Friday. That’s Sept. 24-29th. Our building is located at 685 Sidney Street in St. James where Sidney Street and Highway B intersect.

We also want to invite you to check out our web site. On this website you are able to hear sermons on a variety of topics, and you also are able to hear previous Bible Talk radio broadcasts. The web address is sjchurchofchrist.com.