

XXIX. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

"How Christ Governs the Family"

Selected Texts

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The last three studies of this series on Timeless Truths for Timely Topics have been on this matter of how God designs and governs the state, the church and the family and how He keeps them in order particularly in a sin broken world. In this study we will look at the family which is the institution of the family and what God has done to order it in light of the fall of sin. How are we to look at the family? We will get to that in just a moment.

A couple of studies ago we looked at how God governs the state and the church. The institution of creation is the family. With the institution of the fall – the fall into sin and the depravity of man – God put into place government or state in order to protect those who would pursue that which is good, punish evil doers and provide an environment whereby the family and the church can function freely. Because of redemption God put into place the church. Christ came into this world and went to the cross to do three things – defeat Satan and sin, to save His people from their sins and thirdly to purchase His church with His own blood. We live in the context of all three of these basic institutions – the state, the church and the family – as professing believers in Christ.

These three are, according to God's Word as He unfolds them into the New Covenant, interdependent but not hierarchical. In other words, the state does not commandeer the family or the church. The church does not commandeer the family or the state and the family does not commandeer the church or the state. The three have integrity for God's appointment for they all have their sphere of interest in which I am to engage as a believer. They do affect one another because of their interdependency.

Secondly, all three, according to the Bible are not only designed by God but are most profitable when they operate under God. In our own nation our forbearers understood that. That's why in the very founding document of the Declaration of Independence it is affirmed four different times that the nation was to be under God. That doesn't mean it is to be a theocracy because they fully understand that the theocracy has been removed. God's Kingdom manifested through His covenant people at one time was identified with one nation but no longer is the Kingdom of God now identified with the work of the church of Jesus Christ to expand the Kingdom of God. No longer is it entrusted to one nation for the Kingdom of God is entrusted to the church to take to all the nations and it is a spiritual Kingdom that affects nations but does not belong to any one nation therefore never should be or can be a theocracy established that says the Kingdom of God and this nation are one and the same but every nation makes a decision as to whether they will be a theistic nation or a secular/atheistic nation.

Our forbearers said we were to be a theistic nation in which we are under God but the state is not to determine the right way to worship God or the right church to endorse for it is to create the environment of freedom where good is encouraged and evil is punished so that the church is free to flourish, a freedom of conscience, a freedom of religion and that the family is now free to function as well. That is why churches are not taxed. They are not taxed because they are philanthropic. When you tax something you declare your supremacy over it and you ultimately control it. That was why at one time there was no income tax because the income belonged to the family. These

property and income taxes all came later as temporary taxes but were not in place originally because the family was to be free from the taxation of the state. The state would operate on the basis of minimal taxes and fees. The earth belonged to the Lord and entrusted to families and did not belong to the state and the state had no control of it. It is not that way now but that is how those three spheres were seen to operate.

We have perhaps lived in a wonderful situation where we have benefited from those who think through a Christian world and life view. What is the purpose of the state, the family and the church? Did our forbearers get it perfectly right? Absolutely not but they at least had us on a track where we could see it mature but now we see it in danger of dissolution under our very eyes. One of the reasons why we are in danger of this dissolution is because Christians no longer think Biblically.

Do you believe Satan has plans for your demise? Do you believe God has plans for your good and His glory? Do you believe God's grace is relentless, endless and unstoppable toward His people? Why do you believe this? You believe this because the Word of God tells you this and the Word of God is truth. Christians have to learn the truth to develop a right world and life view so that we're not susceptible to cults, errors and false doctrines and inadequate world and life views. I will be starting another series in a month on developing a Christian world and life view that we actually have minds that are transformed and not conformed to the world. In this series I will develop the five essential pillars to a Christian world and life view.

When you get a Christian world and life view you begin to think through what the purpose of the state, the family and the church is. By the way, the church can't be your family. The church can equip you in your family for that is its job. The church can be the family of families but the church can't be the dad and mom to your child. I can help minister to you as a pastor to equip you and to assist to the best of my ability as a father in the church but we can't become what we weren't designed to be. The state cannot become the church or family either. Whenever you have a state that decides they are not going to be limited and decide to be the messiah for everyone then what becomes the enemy of the messianic state are the family and the church. They must be marginalized and eradicated.

That is why I want to take time here to talk about what the family is supposed to be. All the good intentions and programs that the state designs will never take the place of the family. Almost universally they will actually destroy families as right-hearted as they may be. We need to be working on re-establishing the institution of creation in common grace for families to be in existence that don't even know the Lord for at least with common grace there would be some sense of what the family was designed to be and by redeeming grace we should present before the world what God's grace can produce in a husband, wife, father, and mother who care for their children in and for the Lord. In this day and age we need to focus on what it means to be the church and how to equip families because when you distort the family as we now do with our distortions of what marriage and family is, and with the state attempting to tell families they know better for your children than you do, then what we actually have is a golden opportunity to furnish by the grace of God a marvelous presentation of what God's grace can do in a family.

I can assure you the state usurpation of the family will lead to destruction. Could there be this glorious testimony of the church of Jesus Christ through redeeming grace and common grace impacting a nation? Here is the God designed family, a family under God, proclaimed by a church under God to a state, a government that needs to surrender and once again take under God from simply being on a coin and bring it back to reality. This is our opportunity and how can that possibly be there?

What does that family look like? I'm going to give you three essentials to be thinking about. The first thing that is foundational to the family is a Biblical marriage of intimacy and unity. Ephesians 5:22–33 says [22] *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] 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. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

[25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [32] This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

I could cover a whole series on this passage but I will only touch on a couple of things from it. Marriage is not an available institution that God just haphazardly picks out as an illustration of Christ to His church. No, one of the reasons I will continually speak to the sanctity of marriage being a conjugal, heterosexual, monogamous relationship between one man and one woman for one life is because God has placed the institution of here for a primary purpose as a testimony of His redeeming relationship with His people through Jesus Christ. Christ is the Groom who left His Father to go to the cross to purchase His bride with His own life and in His death and resurrection secures her and nothing can separate His bride from Him. That institution of marriage must stand paramount.

Secondly, it is there for human flourishing. This is how God created us. It is the institution of creation. Paul's foundation for this is from Genesis 2:24 which he is quoting in Ephesians 5:31 from the creation saying this is how God made man, male and female to be united together in a marriage to image the Triune God as husband and wife. It takes both in the intimacy of marriage to give a picture. People are always searching for illustrations of the Trinity and they all fail. You cannot illustrate one God in Three Persons but the closest expression of it is the marriage relationship where a male and a female are required to properly image God for God made man in His image, male and female. The unity of the Trinity is best pictured in the oneness that God has given in marriage. It's still inadequate but it's the best picture of the intimacy of the Triune God. So it is an institution of creation.

Thirdly, Paul is speaking in reference to Christ and the church, however it has application to your life and marriage is a benefit to you but its primary purpose is to exist as a shout to the world of God's relentless, irresistible love and grace to purchase a bride by the gift of His Son who left Him to redeem us so that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ, even when we would go the way of whoredom. He will pursue us. He will not divorce us. He will pursue His people to bring them back to Himself.

Then you begin to apply it to the intimacy in the human relationship of marriage and its unity that we are one. We are one when we leave and cleave. The way you cleave most profoundly is in a personally relationship with Christ. So where do you start with a marriage of intimacy and unity? You start by focusing upon Christ personally, both of you. Marriage is not a partnership where you meet in the middle and you win fifty percent of the time and you lose fifty percent of the

time. Marriage is you die to yourself and you meet in Christ. The more you grow in Christ the more you will experience the intimacy and unity that God provides for His people in a covenant home, a marriage. This is foundational to family. This is where the best parenting takes place.

I want you to know that my heart goes out to everyone and anyone facing the challenge of being a single parent for whatever reason but the way for me to encourage is not to dismiss the importance of maintaining if at all possible by the grace of God, a unified marriage in and for the Lord. Are there Biblical grounds for divorce? Yes. Is divorce sometimes necessary to protect the victim? Yes, but by God's redeeming grace we need to bring the power of the Gospel to bear so that we repent of our sins and establish our marriages whole in order to parent, as well as to maintain the glory of God and the witness of the sufficiency of God's grace. A personal relationship between a husband and wife is foundational to the marriage which is foundational to the family.

That personal commitment to Christ then is a submission to the Spirit of God to the Word of God as to what the role of husband is and the role of a wife is. What does a husband do? The text is clear. A husband has two responsibilities. One is he is the head of his wife and he is to lead his wife as a servant leads. Jesus teaches us what this leadership is all about. The kings of this world come as head and they then make people serve them. This King comes and He grabbed a towel and washes feet. He is a servant leader and that's the kind of leadership a man brings to his wife. He leads her as a servant before the Lord to move her forward in her relationship with Christ, willingly taking responsibilities of leadership in order to give the family direction in servanthood and a sacrificial heart.

Secondly he is to love his wife two ways – as Christ loves the church and as he would love himself. This is the principle of Christ-centered and identification. So how did Christ love the church? He went to the cross and died for her that she might have life and might be washed with the water of the Word, clothed with the blood of Christ and wrapped with the righteousness of Christ. So a man is to give sacrificial love to his wife. So how is he to love his wife like his own body? You need to circle back. When you get married a man shall leave his father and mother, cleave to his wife and the two shall become one. To be neglectful and certainly abusive of your wife makes as much sense as going to beat your head against the wall. You are one with her and she is one with you. You nurture. You show up on time to eat. You get the things in place to rightly love the Lord and your neighbor as yourself. You know how you are to love yourself for Christ's sake, then love your wife as you would love yourself because you are one with her. What you do against her you have just done against yourself and you have done against the Lord who gave her to you and you to her.

What is the wife to do? It is twofold. She is to submit and respect. I could probably spend the rest of my time telling you what submission doesn't mean. I know we live in an egalitarian society that doesn't like the notion of submission at any point in time. We even have a hard time having our children to be submissive to teachers and principals, much less in the context of a marriage relationship. I have a great illustration for submission and it's from the first marriage. Where did Eve come from? She came from Adam's side. She is not from his head and therefore not over him. She is not from his feet and therefore not under him. She comes from his side to complete him and that's what submission points to. I could use the Second Adam, Christ, who goes to the cross to purchase His bride with His blood which flowed from His side. We are as the bride of Christ joint heirs with Christ.

Submission does mean not to compete. It's not a statement of inferiority or superiority. When a policeman wants me to stop I am going to stop and submit to the governing authorities over

me. I'm not going to get into a contest of superiority and inferiority for it is role and responsibility for order in God's society. God has given the order in the marriage for the wife not to compete and conquer her husband but to complete and respect her husband and come along side of him. Peter tells wives not to be frightened by any fears but as the daughter of Sarah, even if your husband is disobedient to the Word he can be won to the Word without a word as he observes your chaste and respectful behavior. It is the powerful witness of a wife who puts her trust in the Lord. Notice that it is an act of worship, ladies. Submit to your husband as unto the Lord. Ultimately you'll never do it until you get a big sovereign Savior. The Savior is who will give you the freedom to embrace that relationship. That foundation of marriage then leads to the foundation to the family.

Another foundation to the family is Biblical parenting. What is Biblical parenting? Here are three objectives of Biblical parenting. Let's start by looking at Ephesians 6:1—which says, [1] *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* [2] *“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),* [3] *“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”* [4] *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Your number one purpose is to raise your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That means evangelize and disciple them. Bring them to Christ. That is your number one responsibility. Everything else pales into insignificance in light of that objective to bring your child to Christ, as early as you can for we know not our days. As they confess Christ you then begin to teach them how to live by grace for Christ with intentionality. You teach them a Christian world and life view. I have had the privilege to raise three children and use to love this part of it. I loved asking them questions about what they thought something meant. We would pick a movie we could see as a family and when we would leave we would talk about what that movie meant to each other.

My oldest daughter said to me one time “Can't we just go to a movie and enjoy it one time.” I said “No, you're not going to sit there with a blank mind when someone is trying to write their world and life view on you.” Every form of communication (song, movie, play, commercial etc.) has a world and life view. They are going to find a way to get their world and life view stuck into your mind. They are a lot better at it than we are at the church to tell you the truth.

“LSMFT.” This means ‘Lucky Strike means fine tobacco.’ Winston tastes good like a... cigarette should. Neither of these commercials has been played for almost four decades yet many of you remember them. So no wonder those people pay 11 million dollars to get those 30 seconds in front of you and they all have a world and life view. It is either a theistic world and life view reasonably faithful to God's Word or a secular world and life view that is focused upon man that is the measure of all things. That secular world and life view has about 39 million isms that are possible but they all boil down to what Jesus said to Peter; you have set your mind on man's interest and not God's. This is a wrong world and life view Peter. You are looking at the cross wrong because you're looking at it through a man-centered world and life view and not a God-centered world and life view.

I believe the greatest thing you can give to your children after you lead them to Christ is a good, real library – not a virtual one. I think the second best thing you can do is get them started in life to be able to think Biblically and to make sure they have a Christian education. I am not going to tell you how to get them the Christian education for that is between you and the Lord but all I know is that it is the parent's responsibility. Fathers train up your child. Teach them. The teaching of kindness is upon the mother's tongue. Now do you see why it is important to have a marriage of intimacy? It is so that as a unit you can raise your child together and a father can provide only what

a father can and a mother provides only what a mother can provide. We are not interchangeable parts.

Recently there was a study that cost millions of dollars but found out that when fathers and mothers are correcting and encouraging they do it differently. Now there is a good use of your tax money – not. They found out that the vast majority of women when they are correcting or encouraging their child they sit or stand beside them. A father when he encourages or instructs his child he stands right in front of them. That's why Paul said I was with you as a father and as a nursing mother. The fact is that there are two dynamics that are necessary. That's why the marriage must have intimacy and unity in order to engage in the parenting that needs to take place. So the purpose of parenting is that you train up your child to come to Christ and to think Biblically so that their world and life view feeds their life love of Christ that leads to a life style for Christ.

Another point of parenting is to train your children to leave you, not cleave to you. I believe my generation has done a terrible job on this. We decided that our children were here for our self-esteem and so many of us in my generation did not raise our children to leave us and the result is the generation before us, the age of adolescence, was 18 and a half. Today the age of adolescence is 27 and a half. We have raised very adept people technologically but socially, emotionally and unfortunately even more challenging spiritually, we have not raised our children to leave us but to cleave to us. [24] *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh* (Genesis 2:24). We should be raising them to leave us to be united in a marriage to establish a home with and for Christ and that's our parenting.

That means when you are parenting you must believe the promises of God. I am so glad I believe in covenant theology because I believe my God has made a covenant promise that I'll be a God to you and to your children after you. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, you and your household for the promise is for you and your children and all who are afar off even as many as the Lord your God shall call to Himself. I Corinthians 7:14 says [14] *For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. **Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.*** So I don't have to parent in order to get God's grace but I parent having been promised God's grace and therefore can bring my children to the means of grace.

What is my objective? My objective is that they will come to follow the steps of Christ. Christ grew in wisdom which is knowledge, understanding and wisdom. He grew in stature. He grew in favor with God and He grew in favor with man. I want to teach my children in Christ and for Christ, framed with His Word. What is wisdom from above? How do you live with wisdom? Then they grow in stature so that they don't live to eat but they eat to live for Christ. You don't live to drink. You drink to live for Christ. To grow in favor with God is a life of intimacy with God that is constantly growing in, for and with Christ so that the Holy Spirit is not being grieved or quenched but received in love. Then by His grace to grow in favor with man and that is how we treat others with civility, respect and speak the truth in love.

So the foundation to the family is a Biblical marriage in Christ and for Christ with Christ given roles and responsibilities. The second foundation was Biblical parenting to lead your children to Christ, to teach them to think Biblically and live for Christ and to leave you in order to establish a family for Christ.

The last foundational principle is that in the family we parent and raise our children and as a family we live Biblically in the other two spheres – the state and the church. I want to teach my children how to honor and respect and live in a state, a government. How are you as a Christian supposed to do this? What is Christian patriotism? I agree with C. S. Lewis. Patriotism is no more

and no less than the very feeling you have every time you come back to the house you were raised in. There is a reason it is called homeland. Here is a nation that You have placed me in. I want to know how to live in this nation for Christ and I want to teach my children to do it. Then how do I take my children and family into the church and how do I bring the church into the lives of my children and family, not as an afterthought but as a priority of relationship? I have a promise of God's grace but God's grace flows through the means of grace.

There is a very important moment when we do a baptism here at the church and I'll ask the parents, "Do you acknowledge that your child is in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?" In other words, your child is lost. You believe God's promises that He'll be a God to you and your children after you but you know you're not starting with a blank slate here. Your child is lost and in need of regeneration and justification. The second question I ask the parents is "Do you look to the Lord to save your child even as you publically affirm that He is your Lord and Savior once again?" In other words, your desire is that they are raised in and for Christ. Then I will say to the parents "Do you now with full reliance upon the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, endeavor to set before your child a Godly example? Will you pray with and for your child? Will you teach your child the Word of God and will you use all the means that God has appointed in His church to raise your child in and for Christ?"

The God of grace that has promised His work of grace to your children has given that means of grace in the family of families, the church and they are to be united. They are to minister to one another. If you are single and reading this, ask the Lord to give you wisdom about where you pursue marriage and it begins with the fact that, that spouse must be a believer and not just a believer but a demonstrated believe that is going to push you forward in your walk with Christ and for Christ. If you are a single parent, while I will not claim because I think it's a false hope that we can supply what the other parent is not there to do, I can tell you that we will be there to do all we can do as we pray for you, surround you and uphold you in what the Lord will do through you. As we point you to the Lord who comes to the fatherless, who comes to those who are without that person of intimacy in the home, we will attempt to be His arms, His feet, His voice but we will point you to Him and the work He will do even as we will ask Him to work through us with you and for you.

For the rest of us, ask God to give us families under God's grace that show the intimacy of marriage with a husband and wife in intimate unity, raising their covenant children in and for Christ, in the body of Christ. Recently, I had someone say to me, giving a complement to our children's pastor and staff "Pastor, my child is thinking more Biblically than I ever thought possible. I am so excited about what they are learning." It is God's family with your family, producing a testimony for Christ in a nation that desperately needs to see it and hear it. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word to cover this subject which is so much broader but thank You that we could at least begin to pull out and distill some basic Biblical truths. I thank You for these families that are here and these marriages that are here. I thank You for these singles that are here that have before them Your call upon their life whether single or married. I pray for those who are parenting in a single dynamic and those who are bringing children in their homes through foster care, orphans and adopting. I pray that You would help us live in this broken world by the power of Your grace and directed by Your Word for Christ's sake, I pray it in Jesus' Name, Amen.