

"The Foundation of the Family"
Gen. 1:27-28, 2:18-25, 3:16-19, 4:7

- INTRO. - No series on the family would be complete without a message on the foundation that was laid by God for its existence and blessing. In fact, a person's entire perspective on the family hinges on whether or *not* they believe it was established by God.

- If it is (in fact) established by God (as the Bible declares) then He is the One who determines what it is to be and how it is to function. We have all kinds of new versions of "family" today, but only God can say, if what *we* call a family, is truly a family.

- Marriage between a man and a woman is God's design. He is the One who established it – and He is the only One who can speak authoritatively as to how it should be. If we really want to know how marriage can be the best that it is intended, we have to go to God's Word.

- You know, you and I live in a day in which there is so much available to (supposedly) enrich our marriages and families. We have all kinds of books and seminars and websites and blogs (and all sorts of other resources) – and yet, the family seems to be floundering as never before.

- There seem to be so many "experts" telling us what we need to do to have a fulfilled family life – and yet we continue to struggle to make it what it was meant to be.

- We are in desperate need to go back to the source of the family – to God's design. We need to turn to the One who established the family to begin with, and hear what He has to say. We need to go all the way back to the creation of the world (and the very first marriage) to see how God designed it and what He intends for it.

- In the first three chapters of Genesis we see the foundation of the family. What God did at the beginning of the world determines His plan for marriage and the family.

- And listen, our fallen world has been trying to re-define it for centuries, but it will only result in fulfillment and blessing when we do it God's way. Part of the creation account details the entrance of sin into the world – and sin has marred everything God created to be "good." But we can still experience the family as God originally intended it if we will follow His plan.

- And we *know* that the family is very important to God (as the foundation of human society) because you don't go two chapters into the first book of the Bible before you come to the first marriage in history.

- We're going to look at that first marriage this morning, and (by the way) there has never been another marriage like it. This was a very unique marriage (as God established the home).

- For one thing, there were no in-laws to deal with. There was no comparing one's spouse with parents. Eve couldn't run home to mama if things didn't go well around the house. There was no such thing as "parental interference" because there were no parents.

- And yet, even though this first marriage was unique in some ways, God intends for us to learn from it what His desire is for marriage and the family. What we must understand, is that success in marriage goes back to what is established right here in Genesis – and *that* is the key to a happy home and a blessed family.

- You and I will never be happy and fulfilled until we do things God's way. We will never experience the family the way God designed it if we fail to follow the principles He has given us in His Word (beginning right here in Genesis).

- God is the Master-designer, and He is the one who created the family – and even though it may appear that the family is on very shaky ground in our day and time – it will never go out of style because God has established it as the greatest and most fulfilling relationship on earth.

- So with that introduction, I want us to go (now) into the first few chapters of Genesis – back to the establishment of marriage and the family – and note some very important principles God has given us in His Word.

- And, of course, (as we go through this series) we will see what the rest of Scripture has to say about the family (in particular what Paul has to say about it in the NT), but we are laying the foundation this morning, and here in Genesis we see three main truths. We see the "start of family composition," "the source of family conflict" and "the solution to family contention." That's our outline. We begin with:

I. THE START OF FAMILY COMPOSTION (1:27-28)

- In Gen. 1:27-28 we have God's very first words about men and women. Notice what it says here, "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

- Wait a minute! You mean there is a difference between male and female? You mean God created the sexes to be uniquely different? Of course He did! Only fools can't see that! Only in our current day of reprobate thinking are people confused about that. It's *not* that difficult to tell if a person is a male or a female. This is God's design and we should never blur that.

- But go on to v. 28, "And 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.'"

- Now, most men like that verse because it talks about hunting and fishing – but notice (first of all) that both the

man and the woman were created equally in the image of God. As persons – as human beings – in our standing and value and worth – we are completely equal.

- What this teaches us is that God originally created men and women to be co-regents. They were to rule over the earth *together*. As a team they were to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. As a team they were to subdue the animals, etc.

- And notice that (originally) there was no animosity – there was no struggle or fighting – there was nothing but perfect unity – and that is how God designed marriage to be.

- Of course, there are no perfect human marriages (because there are no perfect human beings) but I believe we see (here) the Lord's original intent. God created marriage as a special union between a man and a woman. He created it to be the absolute best relationship humans can have with another human. That's God's design.

- But there's more here, because in chapter 2 we find what you *could* call a "close up" of what God did in the establishment of marriage and family life. Chapter one states it in a capsulized form, but chapter two gives us some details.

- Look at chapter 2 and let's pick it up in v. 18, "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'" This is

the first thing in God's creation that the Bible says is "*not good*."

- If you go back to the previous chapter, you see where *everything* God created He declared to be "good" – the heavens, the earth, the stars, the planets, the animals – everything was "good."

- But here we are told that there was one thing that was "*not good*." It was *not good* for the man to be alone. Of course, he was *not technically* alone – because he walked with God and he had all the animals around him – but he had no *human* companionship.

- So God said, "I will make him a helper suitable for him." Now, women have often chafed at that word "helper," but the Hebrew word means "one who supports" or (better yet) "one who compliments and completes." She is one whom God specifically created to take care of Adam's aloneness.

- This doesn't mean that the wife is to be subservient to the husband, or that she is simply a "helper" in the sense of being a "gopher" or one who is at his constant beck and call.

- No, this means that she completes him. She compliments him and makes up for his areas of weakness. This is really talking about the fact that a husband and a wife are better (and stronger) *together* than they are apart.

- You know, us guys don't usually like to admit that we need any kind of help – but the truth of the matter is, we need a lot of help! And God's design for marriage is that the woman comes alongside the man – and *together* they are greater than they are apart.

- In fact, I would go so far as to say, that (biblically speaking) the woman is the only person in the world that can help a man be all God wants him to be.

- As Gary Ezzo put it, “God did *not* make a helper for Adam in the sense of a hired hand, but as a compliment – one who would complete the man in every way.”

- And please understand – the woman was no afterthought in the mind of God. She was *not* a footnote at the bottom of the creation page. She was in God's plan all along.

- In fact, I heard someone say one time, that after God created man, He said to Himself, “I think I can do better than that” (and then created the woman). Now, (of course) that is said in jest (because God always does everything perfectly) but the point is, that the woman (as a completer for man) was always God's divine plan.

- But before she was created, Adam didn't even know he was alone. After all, you can't miss what you've never had. It never bothered Adam that he didn't have a date on Saturday night (because *no one* had a date on Saturday night).

- He had no idea he was missing out, or that he needed a helper suitable for him. And that's why vv. 19-20 give us what many have called “the principle of elephants, giraffes, and zebras.”

- Look at v. 19, “And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field...” (Stop right there.)

- Why is this in here at this point? Why did God parade all the animals in front of Adam and have him give them names. He did it for a very specific reason. Look at the last part of v. 20, “...but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.”

- God deliberately awakened in Adam a sense of aloneness (and a sense of need). By parading all these animals before him, Adam became aware of his need for companionship and completion. He came to realize his need for a wife.

- Of course, I'm sure Adam had a thoroughly fascinating time naming all these animals – but as he does this, he begins to notice something. All the animals come in pairs. He notices there is a Mr. elephant and a Mrs. elephant. There's a Mr. giraffe and a Mrs. giraffe. There's a Mr. zebra and a Mrs. zebra.

- And suddenly there was a gnawing in his stomach and a twanging in his heart. He suddenly realized that there was no “Mrs. Adam.” All the animals have a mate but he doesn’t.

- So for the very first time, Adam felt his aloneness. For the first time he came to understand that he was *not* complete – that he was missing something very important. God intentionally created this desire in him for a mate.

- Now listen, *that* is *still* God’s design for marriage. It is intended by God to fulfill us like no other relationship on this earth. God made sure that Adam came to the firm conclusion that there was no other creature on earth that could complete him and compliment him like the woman.

- In other words, God wanted Adam (and every generation after him) to know that only marriage (between a man and a woman) can meet the deepest needs of intimacy and cure aloneness. This is God’s design.

- Well, I need to speed up a bit here, but in vv. 21-22 we have the account of how God “fashioned” the woman from the rib of Adam. This is (of course) the first recorded surgery in the Bible.

- ILL. – Maybe you heard about the little boy who had been taught this in Sunday School. That afternoon, he was running on the playground when he suddenly grabbed his side (which was hurting from running so

hard). He blurted out, “Oh, I think I’m going to have a wife!”

- Well, Adam really *did* get a wife that way, and I think it is significant that God chose to fashion the woman from the rib of Adam. Matthew Henry observes, “Eve was made by God *not* out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arms to be protected, and near his heart to be loved.”

- By the way, when God made all the other creatures (including man), He simply *made* them. But when He made the woman, it says He “fashioned” her. He uses a completely different word.

- This word means “to rebuild” or (more precisely) “to rebuild in such a way as to cause to flourish.” What flourished when God created the woman? The man did. The creation did. All the earth did. Human history did.

- And what is the application for us? God wants us to flourish in the marriage relationship. His design is for both the man and the woman to be *better* as a result of the union.

- And marriage is intended by God to cause the rest of creation to flourish because this is the foundational relationship upon which everything else in society is built.

- By the way, notice that (at this point) there were no children present. Adam and Eve were told that they were to multiply and fill the earth, but they were a complete family before children ever entered the picture.

- This is important to understand for a couple of reasons. First, we need to realize that a husband and a wife are complete with or without children. Children are *not* necessary for the kind of fulfilling relationship God created for the man and the woman from the beginning.

- Of course, children are a welcome addition to the family, but they are not necessary to fill the “aloneness” experienced by mankind. Children are a result of that completed relationship, but they are *not* necessary in order to achieve fulfillment in marriage.

- In other words, marriage is the first and primary human relationship upon which all other human relationships are built – and a married couple is a family, whether there are children present or *not*.

- There is an important application that comes from this realization – and that is, we must avoid the danger of embracing a “child-centered” family. You know what I’m talking about. We see it all the time in our society. Parents allow the children to become the center of the home. The kids call all the shots. Everything is all about the kids.

- Listen, that is *not only* destructive to a marriage, it is also harmful to the kids. A child-centered home causes

the child to become self-centered and self-focused to such a degree that he will become ruined by that. He will end up becoming completely consumed with his own wants that nobody will be able to stand being around him. Parents, you are creating a real problem for your children when you did that.

- Let your children know that they are a welcome part of the family, but don’t make them the center of the family. Don’t let them rule the roost – please – for their own good and for yours.

- Listen, (please understand) the most important thing you can do for your children is to give priority to your marriage! The more you love your spouse (and make it obvious to your children that he or she comes first) the better off your children will be.

- Don’t let your family revolve around your children, but make sure it gives priority to your marriage. That is the relationship that must be at the top (apart from your relationship with God).

- Of course, the children must know that they are loved (and that they are a welcomed part of the family) but they are *not* the center of the family. Having a child-centered family is a big mistake that you will regret.

- One author wrote, “You can spend 24 hours a day with your children and never be a better father or mother than what you are as a husband or a wife.”

- And think about this – the parent-child relationship (as precious as it is) will always be *temporary*. On the other hand, the husband-wife relationship is meant to be *permanent*. Those children will one day leave the home, and then you will find yourself as “empty nesters.”

- That’s why your greatest investment must be in your marriage. When your kids are grown, it will be the two of you. That is why no other relationship should supersede that of your marriage.

- Well, look at v. 23. Here is how Adam described this experience: “And the man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Man.’”

- If Adam was trying to be romantic here, he flunked. Try saying that to your wife sometime. It sounds like he is thinking of anatomy. This is *not* very romantic at all.

- But even if it is *not* good poetry, it is excellent theology! This is a Hebrew expletive. What this is saying (here) is roughly, “Hot diggety dog!!!” It is an expression of excitement and joy.

- He is saying, “This is the one I have been looking for. She is human just like me. She is made in the image of God just like I am. She is the perfect mate.”

- Well, in v. 24 we see the inauguration of the marriage, where the two literally become one. You see, what really

happens is a wedding is two funerals. The two cease to be independent persons and become one flesh.

- Look at v. 24, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” We could spend time on the “leaving” part (which is very important) and the “cleaving” part – but the point I am making this morning is that marriage is a divinely-ordained institution. Marriage came before the church and even before human government. It is truly the basic, foundational unit of human society.

- Now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if the story could just end right here? We all know it doesn’t. Something awful happens in chapter three. So we need to move on to:

II. THE SOURCE OF FAMILY CONFLICT

- It is an over-simplification to say that sin is the source of conflict in the home. Ultimately, sin that resulted from the Fall, has brought destruction and death to every area of life. But in the case of the family, it goes even deeper than that.

- We cannot properly understand why it is so difficult to make a marriage work unless we have a good grasp of the *curse* that God placed on the man and the woman after the Fall.

- Although there were different roles and responsibilities in the marriage relationship even *before* the Fall, *after* the

Fall it has become difficult *indeed* to maintain oneness and harmony in marriage because of the curse and its effects on the home.

- Just as childbirth suddenly became a painful experience, and earning a living became a struggle – so maintaining the kind of marriage relationship that God had designed marriage to be became a great challenge, to say the least.

- Now, what was this curse? Well, we read about it in v. 16 of chapter 3 – “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’”

- You say, “Which part is worse, the pain of childbirth or the husband ruling?” Listen, it is *not* pleasant for men or for women to try to deal with the effects of this curse, but we *must* understand it if we are ever to hope to overcome it and to have the kinds of marriages we desire and God intends.

- What is this curse all about? For our purpose this morning, the part we need to understand is the last part (that says), “yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” And what we need to understand, is that *both* the Feminist movement and the Male Chauvinist movement began right here.

- To understand the meaning of this phrase, let’s (first) look at what it does *not* mean. Many commentators say

that this simply means that it’s normal for a wife to have a strong sexual and psychological dependence on her husband – and it’s very normal for her to desire the man and for the man to rule over the woman.

- But folks, that can’t be the proper interpretation for three reasons: (1.) Sexually, in most cases, the man has a much stronger desire for his wife than she does for him. (So that interpretation is *not* true in a practical sense.) (2.) Historically, women have *never* loved their role of submission to their husbands. There is not a single period in history where women were *not* chafing under male authority (including, of course, today). (3.) If this was just normal desire, then this would not be a curse (would it)? Whatever is being described here has to be addressing something that was different *after* the curse than it was *before* it.

- So what does this phrase mean? The word for “rule” is the Hebrew word “masal.” It means “to reign over.” In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) the word “kathistemi” is used, which means “to install in an office” or “to elevate to an official position.”

- So what is this part of the curse all about? It is saying that whereas, before the Fall the man and woman ruled together as co-regents – *now* (after the Fall) there would be a change of authority. God said (in essence), “I am going to install the man over the woman” (in terms of position).

- The other term we need to understand is the word “desire.” This word is used only one other time in the Pentateuch, 15 verses later, in Gen. 4:7. The word means “to compel, to urge, to seek to control.”

- Let’s see how it is used in Gen. 4:7. This is in the context of God speaking to Cain about the evil desire in his heart to kill his brother (and that his countenance had fallen as a result).

- God says to Cain, “If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

- Now folks, this is the very same word in the very same grammatical structure. Whatever it means in 4:7 – it means the same thing in 3:16.

- So how should we interpret Gen. 3:16 then? It means something like this: “To the woman He said...your desire will be to control you husband, but he will rule over you.” Now, there are those who don’t like that, but it is the proper interpretation of this verse.

- And listen, if you want to know why marriage is tough, it is because there has been a struggle to accept our God-given roles from that day on. This is why we have women’s liberation movements. This is why we have male oppression and abuse.

- But (you see) we really should not expect anything different in the world, because we have been living with the results of the curse from that day until this.

- Sin isolates us from God and it isolates us from one another. Every time a husband and wife come to me on the brink of divorce, it is because of what sin has done in their relationship. It is the result of the curse of sin.

- ILL. – In the words of an old country preacher, “Sin will take you farther than you ever wanted to go, keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay, and cost you more than you ever wanted to pay.” (Isn’t that true?)

- Very few people will argue that there is pain in childbirth or that weeds will take over your garden if you neglect it – but we have a hard time seeing that this is just as much a part of the curse as that is. This is why there is so much difficulty in marriage.

- ILL. – I heard someone say one time, “The difference between courtship and marriage is the difference between the pictures in the seed catalogue and what actually comes up.” Too often that is true.

- Someone wisely observed that there are only two causes of unhappy marriages – men and women. (Pause) Well, before we leave here in a state of despair, let’s quickly move on to:

III. THE SOLUTION TO FAMILY CONTENTION

- Jesus Christ is the answer to the conflict in marriage brought on by the effects of the curse. Now, we need to be careful not to say that Jesus has *removed* the curse. One of the most respected pastors in America expressed it that way, but I think that is misleading.

- All aspects of the curse are still intact and will *not* be removed until Christ returns. But in Christ, when we are controlled by His Holy Spirit, we husbands can learn to love our wives the way Christ loves the church, and wives can learn to submit to the loving leadership of their husbands, just as He has commanded.

- That doesn't come naturally to the flesh, but only comes as we are walking in the Spirit, under the Spirit's control. This *is* possible for genuine believers in Christ.

- And listen, there may be someone here today who is thinking, "My marriage is in so much trouble that I don't think it can be fixed." For some of you, solving the problems in your marriage right now – and resolving the issues that have developed (oftentimes) over many years – is a lot like trying to unscramble an egg. I understand that.

- But you need to take your life as it is right now, and turn it over to the Lord Jesus Christ, and ask Him to help you fix your marriage. You can't do it alone, but He can do it through you.

- And folks, it is only when we accept (and begin to practice) His pattern for marriage (and the family) that we

will find the fulfillment He intends. We can choose to do otherwise, but we will pay the price in our marriages and in our homes. It is inevitable because of the curse.

- And the devil knows that if he can wreck our homes, he can destroy our witness, and wreck our churches, and ultimately wreck our nation. So he has leveled his fiercest darts and his heaviest artillery against the family.

- The devil did his best to destroy the first family, and he will do anything he can to destroy yours as well. But you don't have to become a casualty. The devil may be the greatest home wrecker, but Jesus is the greatest home builder!

- MAKE APPEAL

- PRAYER