

Family

Article XVIII

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4;

13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Key Texts:

Genesis 1:26-28: “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 2:18-25: “And the LORD God said, “*It is* not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. 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. And Adam 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.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

Genesis 3:14-20:

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent:
 “ Because you have done this,
 You *are* cursed more than all cattle,
 And more than every beast of the field;
 On your belly you shall go,
 And you shall eat dust
 All the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
 Between you and the woman,
 And between your seed and her Seed;
 He shall bruise your head,
 And you shall bruise His heel.”

¹⁶ To the woman He said:
 “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
 In pain you shall bring forth children;

Your desire *shall be* for your husband,
And he shall rule over you.”

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:

“ Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;
In toil you shall eat *of* it
All the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
For dust you *are*,
And to dust you shall return.”

²⁰ And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

Exodus 20:12: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”

Deuteronomy 6:4-9: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Psalm 127

Psalm 128

Proverbs (Almost all of it)

Song of Solomon (All of it)

Malachi 2:14-16: Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make *them* one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. “For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”

Matthew 5:31-32: “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

Eph 5:21-6:4

1 Corinthians 7:1-18

Colossians 3:18-21: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”

Titus 2:1-8

1 Peter 3:1-7

The Bible is replete with family imagery as evidenced in the many wonderful verses cited for the *Baptist Faith and Message*, Article 18. The importance of the marriage relationship unfolds symbolically in the Old Testament with God as husband and Israel as wife, and in the New Testament with Jesus as the bridegroom and the church as the radiant bride. Clearly, marriage and family are distinctly theological.

A healthy home has deep spiritual dimensions, and thus the Bible instructs us concerning the family. We as believers must look first to Jesus Christ, our bridegroom, to engage and understand the divine design for marriage. The family provides the altar of transformation where we learn to love and live like Jesus.

God reveals himself as a relational being, and we are created in his image for lasting, intimate relationships—first with God himself, and then with others.

God’s ideal for the home—an intimate relationship that brings deep soul satisfaction to both husband and wife—models grace and faith for the children and proclaims to a lost and lonely world the type of love that God has for his people. This intimacy extends from a spiritual

foundation through a relational sphere and culminates in the physical expression within the bounds of marriage.

The Scriptures give unique imperatives—directed to the husband, the wife, the parents and the children—that detail the incarnation of submission. The key text is Ephesians 5:21-6:4. The godly husband will nourish and cherish his wife, loving her “as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her.” The spiritual husband is a submissive servant of Christ (5:21), humble, gentle, faithfully putting his wife’s welfare and need above his own. The godly wife will respect and honor her own husband, submitting to him “as unto the Lord.” Her character and conduct can draw even an unbelieving husband to faith (1 Pet 3:1-6).

For each the Lord Jesus is the motivation and object of an obedient life. Both husband and wife, absolute equals before the Lord, fix their eyes first upon Him and then upon each other. Obedience for the Christian is neither optional, selective, nor conditioned upon the spouse’s response or behavior.

Should God bless such a household with children, they will witness daily submission and godly love as they are charged to obey their parents “in the Lord.” The family of God operates in direct opposition to our culture and our natural tendency to self-centeredness, self-absorption and self-gratification, and requires the supernatural enablement of the Holy Spirit. The theology of family is characterized by each member outdoing the other in service, in sacrifice, and in submission to the Lord, reflecting gratitude for God’s faithful, intimate love toward us.

Mark Rathel writes, “I am not aware of another denominational confessional statement that includes an article on the family.” The family article, however, arose in response to general societal conditions and pressures on the family.

What does the *BF&M* teach, by way of summary, concerning the family? We make 3 concluding observations.

First, the *BF&M* affirms the family as the foundational institution of society. God created and ordained three social institutions for the benefit of all humanity, namely, 1) the family, 2) the government, and 3) the church. God birthed the church on the day of Pentecost. God instituted governments at some time after the historical entrance of sin into human experience. God instituted the social structure of the family first in the Garden of Eden, before humanity's fall into sin (Gen 2-3). The family serves as both the foundational societal unit and a microcosm of society. As the family goes, so go the societal institutions of government and church. The family mirrors God's nature as personal, relational, and communal.

Second, the *BF&M* properly defines the family as "persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption." The Bible highlights the extended family. A biblical family consists of parents and children, but also grandparents, in-laws, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Further, the practice of adoption beautifully portrays the family of God. Adoption reminds us that salvation from beginning to end is the act of God on our behalf.

Third, the *BF&M* highlights the biblical purposes of marriage. God created marriage for intimate companionship, a relationship the Bible describes as a "one-flesh" relationship (Gen 2:24). The biblical teaching regarding this "one-flesh" relationship extends beyond the uniting of husband and wife in an intimate sexual relationship. Marriage involves a physical, spiritual, and psychological interrelationship between husband and wife.

Marriage provides the proper expression of sexual expression. Rather than being something evil, the Bible affirms sexual intimacy as a gift from God. Paul taught that husbands and wives have mutual responsibilities relative to sexual fulfillment (1 Cor 7:1-5). And, marriage

exists for the propagation for children (Gen 1:27-28). The Bible teaches that children are a gift and heritage from the Lord (Ps 127, 128). We should celebrate them!

Finally, marriage testifies to the Gospel in that the Scriptures use the marriage bond as an illustration of the relationship between God and His people. Husbands are to reflect Christ! Wives are to reflect the Church.

** The study draws from articles by Bill Cutrer and Mark Rathel*