

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



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CREATION ORDER & THE FAMILY

By Gene Burgett

It is not unusual to see or hear references today to the traditional family. The phrase “traditional family” usually refers to a male and female married couple with children. The phrase has been coined to distinguish traditional families from various arrangements referred to as “nontraditional families.” A nontraditional family may reference something as commonplace as a single parent home, to a couple living outside wedlock, to more bizarre situations like same-sex marriages.

The traditional versus nontraditional family models are more than mere clinical phraseology used by sociologists. Both models are presented to children at a very early age as “normal.” Children’s books teach that *Heather Has Two Mommys* and *Jennifer Has Two Daddies*, to another book, simply titled *Daddy’s Roommate*.

This article will examine the family as set forth in the creation narrative found in the Book of Genesis. I have two goals for this treatise: (1) To establish the family envisioned by God and portrayed in the Book of Genesis; and (2) to show that the family arrangement set forth in Genesis recognizes biological truths and deals with them effectively, providing the best environment for nurturing children.

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.”¹⁹Out 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.²⁰So 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.²¹And 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.²²Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.²³And 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.”²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.²⁵And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” (NKJ)

At least three significant facts are taught about the family in this passage. First, it is taught that marriage is *beneficial*. Marriage is God’s remedy for man’s need for companionship. “It is not good that man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). Marriage is far more than mere companionship, it is companionship that is beneficial; not all companions are helpful (1 Cor. 15:33).

Second, Genesis 2:18-26 teaches that marriage is *heterosexual*. In the creation order marriage is between a man and a woman. Or, as some have put it through the years: God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. The heterosexual nature of marriage coincides with one of the divine purposes of marriage, which is propagation of the human race. Thus

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the command, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28), is given after the creation of woman.

Heather's two mommies may be a family according to modern sociology, but it is not in compliance with the creation order and does not adequately deal with reality. In fact, if Adam and Eve had been homosexual, there would be no human race, thus the heterosexual facet of the creation model of the family meets the needs reality imposes on humanity.

Third, a fact that might easily escape us were it not mentioned by Paul, is that *man is obligated to take leadership of the family*. Paul teaches that male leadership is implied by at least three facts of the creation order. (1) Man was created first (1 Tim. 2:12-13). Though this simple fact may not mean much to us initially, it is likely tied to the Jewish concept of the firstborn. The firstborn male in a Jewish family had special responsibilities and was compensated for them in the distribution of the parent's estate. This position of privilege may have originated with the creation order preeminence of being the firstborn. (2) Woman was created from the side of man, and not the other way around. "For man is not from woman, but woman from man (1 Cor. 11:8). (3) Man was not "created for the woman, but woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:9). (4) Finally, man named the woman. Though Biblical writers do not specifically mention man providing a name for the woman as teaching male leadership, the context indicates that it does teach male headship. Adam naming the animals was indicative of man's dominion over the creation. Adam naming Eve would have the same significance.

To summarize, man has the leadership position in the husband-wife relationship because man was *before* woman, woman was *from* man, woman was created *for* man, and man *named* woman.

GENESIS 3:16-19

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. ¹⁸Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹In 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."

The reader will recognize the above passage from Genesis 3 as that place where God explains to each one involved in the first sin the consequence for his or her role in the disobedience. Contained in the address to each one is his or her general role in the family unit, and a consequence that is specific to that role. We will also notice how the roles of the man and the woman work together to create the perfect environment for child rearing.

Consider first the words spoken to Eve. Notice that the penalty for her part in the sin is pain in childbearing. This consequence is specific to her role in the family (and in society generally). The woman's basic sphere of influence is domestic. Her general role is in childbearing and child nurturing.

It is safe to assume that prior to the fall of man childbearing was not the painful experience it is today. Not only is childbirth painful at the moment the child is exiting the womb, it is debilitating for a considerable period of time before and after the experience. This is a reality of the situation

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that any workable plan for the family must consider. Furthermore, proper child nurturing demands years of active care before the child is prepared to provide for himself and make his way in the world. Compared to species in the animal kingdom, God made human children in such a way as to require almost twenty years of care before they are properly prepared to live in this world. When I was young my family had a horse that was in foal. Impatiently, we waited for the day when she would give birth. Finally, one morning we arrived at the paddock to find a less-than-one-day-old horse. The contrast between a day-old horse and a human baby of the same age is staggering. Our young horse could walk and even run, albeit running was a bit awkward. The foal could even find its dinner without assistance. How many years are required before a human baby is able to fulfill these minimal tasks? Any adequate plan for the family must consider the extreme long-term needs of the human child.

Before addressing the words spoken to Adam, it is worth noting that the final words spoken to Eve are often misinterpreted. It is often assumed that the words, "Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you," are part of the penalty for the woman's part in the transgression. These words address the headship of man and the role of subjection the woman plays in the husband-wife relationship. It should be noted, however, that the headship of man was established prior to the first sin in the Garden, as has already been noted. Since the man ruling over the woman introduces nothing new, it is probably best viewed as a reaffirmation of her role. The need to reiterate the woman's role is probably due to the fact that it was in taking the lead that she became involved in the first sin.

Now, consider the words spoken to the man.

Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field.

The man's penalty to bear in the transgression is also specific to his role in the husband-wife relationship. The woman's role is essentially domestic, while the husband's role is to be a provider, working outside the home. Since the economic basis for humanity has been agricultural, the ground with which the man works to provide for his family has been altered in such a way as to make his role more difficult.

Notice the wisdom of the creation arrangement. Had the role of provider also been piled on top of the woman's role as child bearer and nurturer, then the family unit is in trouble. Carrying and giving birth to a child are physically debilitating, a situation which endangers the family when the woman is both nurturer and provider. The creation arrangement for the family recognizes the reality of the situation. The creation arrangement acknowledges that the proper environment for child rearing requires two people, each having a distinctive role to fulfill. The role each plays in

the family compliment one another, and they need not be a source of dissension when both the husband and wife each accept and fulfill their position with willing hearts for the good of the family unit.

One final question needs to be addressed. Given that the husband and wife each have roles in the family, is it wrong for a woman to work outside the home? This question is often asked, however, no one would have trouble understanding the answer were the question asked the other way around. Question: Is it wrong for a man to nurture children in the home? Would anyone think a father promoting virtue in his children is a violation of his role as a provider? In fact, he would be guilty of neglect if he refused to "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

It is crucial to understand that while each participant in the marriage has a role, we must not envision these positions as being demarcated with rigid lines that neither can cross. While the main role of the woman is to nurture in the home, who would imagine that the man plays no part in cultivating children in the home? A good role model we often refer to is the virtuous woman, described in Proverbs 31. She finds the proper balance as she "watches over the ways of her household" (Pr. 31:27), while bringing additional income into the home when she "considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard" (Pr. 31:16).

Circumstances may require a spouse to accept roles different from those set forth in the creation model of the family. Death and divorce may force one to be a single head of household. One's spouse may refuse his or her responsibility in the home, forcing the other spouse to takeover that role. If a man refuses to provide spiritual leadership in the home, then his wife would be forced to take up that mantle of responsibility (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). To maintain it would be wrong for a woman to provide spiritual leadership in this circumstance is to teach that God would rather there be no spiritual leadership in the home, than for the woman to provide it.

CONCLUSION

The family arrangement set forth in the creation account in the Bible is well suited to provide the needs of the family unit. There can be no doubt society is moving away from the concept of the married biological parents of a child, actually providing the care necessary to bring that child to adulthood. As the rejection of the Biblical model deepens, we can expect to see all manner of societal ills increase. 

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The Lord Provides . . . Sometimes Through Others

Even before Abraham named the place “The-LORD-Will-Provide” (Gen. 22:14, NKJ), where God supplied the sacrifice instead of Isaac, God had shown that He always provided the means necessary to accomplish His will. Sometimes God used faithful men like Moses, “My servant” (Num. 12:7-8), while at other times He used people who were not faithful to Him, like the heathen King Cyrus, “My shepherd... [and] anointed” (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). The same principle holds true today—the Lord will provide! The Florida School of Preaching has been in existence since 1969. Through these forty plus years, it has not always been easy from a financial standpoint to continue as we have in training men to preach and preparing souls to better serve the Lord. In the past, the Lord has continued to use others in accomplishing His will through us as we “commit these [Gospel truths] to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Most of the time this support comes from faithful individuals and local churches of Christ, while at other times it may come from people who do not know the Lord in the form of wills and estates from non-members of the Lord’s church. Either way, though, it is ultimately the Lord who provides! Are we allowing the Lord to use us to provide His Gospel to a lost and dying world? One way we can do this is to support the school. We need your help. If you would like to know more about the school, feel free to contact us. We would be glad to inform you about this work!

Effective Prayer Results

Due to an unexpected complication and hospital stay, Amber started chemo on March 17, a week later than scheduled. Following her first treatment, more complications hospitalized her. While there, they did another MRI on her brain and found that all three tumors were gone, just a little over three weeks after completing radiation. Thanks be to God! Now the chemo must work on the cancer in her breast, lymph nodes, lungs, and liver. She is scheduled to have three chemotherapies three weeks apart, recheck the cancer, and then go from there. We continue to appreciate the cards, visits, and especially the prayers! Our God is awesome! —*Brian*



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