

The Consequences of Ideas
Lesson 25: Family As Foundation

I. The Family as Foundation

- a. In the Biblical worldview the family provides the **foundation** for social order. It is in families that children learn to love one another, submit to proper authority, and to take responsibility for their lives.
- b. Within the context of the family children **learn** to be responsible for their property, join in community to care for others, and to discover their place in the divine economy.
- c. It is within the biblical context of the family that children are valued and learn what they **ought** to think, what they ought to value and how they ought to act in various situations and settings. *Ps 127:3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD : and the fruit of the womb is his reward. KJV*
- d. Research has shown that when the family is fractured or shattered, societal upheaval **will follow**. The decay and destruction of the family in America undermines the whole social fabric of our culture.
- e. Therefore, we as Christians must identify all **threats** to the stability of family life and must resist these developments or social chaos will ensue. Christians are the guardians of the institution of the family.
- f. The Biblical model for the family unit is rooted in and begins with the institution of marriage. No other idea of "**familiness**" can possibly emulate the design of God's original intention other than marriage.

II. Marriage

- a. In Scripture, the creation of man and woman, and their **one-flesh** union as husband and wife, is the crowning achievement of God's creation. *Genesis 2:23-24 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*
- b. God has ordained the family unit consisting of one man, one woman and their off-spring as the basic element of society. Without the family unit, no society is even **possible**.
- c. In the transmission of life and the nurturing of children, men and women joined as spouses are given the great honor of being **partners** with God Himself in bringing forth the human agents of God's plan. *Ps 78:6-7 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: KJV*
- d. Marriage then, is the **first** institution of human society—indeed it is the institution on which all other human institutions have their foundation.
- e. Apart from the marital relationship no other human relationship **can** supply the psychological, spiritual or social benefits provided by the natural family.
- f. Marriage is a holy **covenant**. God Himself blesses and holds marriage in the highest esteem and uses the figure of the marriage relationship to depict His covenant with Israel *Hos 2:19-20 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD . KJV*
- g. Marriage also pictures the relationship between Christ and His **Church**. *Ephesians 5:32-33 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.*
- h. From a **practical** point of view, vast human experience and social science research confirms that marriage is the original and most important institution for sustaining the health, education, and welfare of all persons in a society.
- i. Where marriage is honored, and where there is a flourishing marriage culture, everyone **benefits**—the spouses themselves, their children, the communities and societies in which they live.
- j. Where the marriage culture begins to **erode**, social pathologies of every sort quickly manifest themselves. This, we have witnessed over the course of the past several decades in our own country.
- k. Perhaps the most telling—and alarming—indicator is the out-of-wedlock **birth rate**. Less than fifty years ago, it was under 5 percent. Today it is over 40 percent.
- l. Our society—and particularly its **poorest** and most vulnerable sectors, where the out of-wedlock birth rate is much higher even than the national average—is paying a huge price for this aberration.
- m. In part, the Christian community with its own divorce rate near **50%** shares the responsibility for eroding the sanctity of marriage in our culture.

III. Our Stand (Manhattandeclaration.com)

- a. As signers of the MD, we confess with sadness that Christians and our institutions have too often scandalously **failed** to uphold the institution of marriage and to model for the world the true meaning of marriage.
- b. Insofar as we have too easily embraced the culture of divorce and remained silent about social practices that undermine the dignity of marriage we **repent**, and call upon all Christians to do so as well.

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- c. To strengthen families, we must stop glamorizing promiscuity and infidelity and **restore** among our people a sense of the profound beauty, mystery, and holiness of faithful and committed marital love.
- d. We must **reform** ill-advised public policies that contribute to the weakening of the institution of marriage, including the discredited idea of unilateral divorce.
- e. We must work in the legal, cultural, and religious domains to **instill** in young people a sound understanding of what marriage is and what it requires.
- f. We must instill in our youth the **value** of marital commitment and communicate to them why it is worth their personal effort in order to grow the kinds of enduring marriages that demonstrate Christian love.

IV. What We Must Do

- a. The beginning place for bringing about change in our culture with regard to correcting social ills is to ensure that **our own** marriages not only endure; but that they flourish.
- b. Ultimately, in order to have flourishing relationships we must realize that issues leading to the breakdown of the family are **spiritual** in nature. *Rom 8:11-14 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. KJV*
- c. In order for marriage, family and other relationships to flourish, individuals within them must renew their commitment to living **authentic** Christian lives. *Heb 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. NIV*
- d. This renewed commitment will require serious, diligent, persistent effort and continuous **action** on the part of individuals to enrich the quality of their relationships. This will include:
 - 1. **Confession** *1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. KJV*
 - 2. **Repentance** *2 Cor 7:11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. NIV*
 - 3. **Forgiveness** *Eph 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. KJV*
 - 4. Identifying **enrichment** goals *1 John 1:8, 10 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. KJV*
 - 5. Identifying and acquiring relationship enrichment **skills** *Eph 4:29-31 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: KJV*
 - 6. Persistent **effort** to live life authentically *1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. KJV*
 - 7. Continuous self **evaluation** and improvement effort *1 John 1:6-7 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. KJV*

V. Application

- a. Knowing the destructive influences of our day assailing marriage and family life, we must cease our tolerance of them; first within ourselves and then within the body of Christ.
- b. We should do everything in our power to strengthen the Church's position as a pro-marriage and family institution.
- c. It will not suffice, therefore, to seek a return of stability to the marriages and families of the land by simply working for changes in law and social policy.
- d. Yet at the same time we must take a firm stand for social policies that support a strong marriage and family life.
- e. As a church we must be supportive of such things as pre-marital counseling, ministry to youth; marital counseling and marriage enrichment ministries.
- f. In what ways can you improve your own marriage, family and other relationships?
- g. What specific steps will you take?