

## A Scriptural Primer: THE FAMILY

While there has been much debate and disagreement about what constitutes a natural family throughout history, God's Word gives very clear direction on what the family is. The basic foundation of a family first appears in God's creation of man, which finds its completion with the sexes.

### MALE AND FEMALE

*"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 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.' Then God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food'; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:26-31 NASB).*

God's plan for Adam and Eve was that they would provide for and help one another in a special bond of love, companionship, and intimacy. God also made man male and female, so that they could fulfill the command of their purpose to be fruitful and multiply.

### THE FALL OF MAN

The Fall of mankind through rebellion against God's Word brought the effects of sin into marriage and the family—through the effects of the Fall on nature and the effects of man's sinful heart. *"To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you' Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat from it"; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return'" (Genesis 3:16-19). From Adam and Eve's sin, we see the origin of death, pain, suffering, disease, lawlessness, murder, etc—disrupting the perfect design of the family.*

Mankind did not begin to be fruitful until after the Fall in Eden. The first children to be born to mankind were Cain and Abel: *"Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, 'I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord.' Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground" (Genesis 4:1-2). Shortly hereafter, we see how the Fall affected man's sinful heart as he began to disrupt and destroy the fabric of the family: *"And it came about when they were in**

*the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him” (Genesis 4:8b), and it went on and on: “Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot, so that the land will not fall to harlotry and the land become full of lewdness” (Leviticus 19:29).*

## HUSBAND AND WIFE

Soon after creating man as “one,” God changed man into “two,” that they would be rejoined as “one” in marriage: *“The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 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.’ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:22-24).*

*“But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).*

## DIVORCE IN MARRIAGE

In Jewish custom, men could break their union to their wives for almost any reason. In those times, the woman was left without any protection or livelihood. In God’s eyes, divorce is abominable because it is a betrayal of trust, a proof of unfaithfulness, and a rejection of commitment—all of which God requires of man, for God is faithful and committed to us.

In God’s eyes, marriage is foundationally about faithfulness and commitment more than our modern view that it is about finding “happiness” or “true love.”

*“But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?” (1 Corinthians 7:10-16)*

*“It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.’*

*But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil" (Matthew 5:31-37).*

*"Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?' And He answered and said, 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.' They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?' He said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery'" (Matthew 19:3-9).*

Part of God's dislike of divorce is because He desires faithfulness in His creation. The other reason is because God's purpose in marriage is larger than just the husband and wife.

*"And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, 'Why does he not?' Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 'For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless'" (Malachi 2:13-16).*

## MARRIAGE BEHAVIOR

God desires husbands and wives to be committed and faithful to each other in a special bond of honor, love, and subjection.

*"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7 ESV).*

*"Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:22-25; 28-31 NASB).*

## TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT GOD

God said of Abraham, *“I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him”* (Genesis 18:19).

God wants families to diligently focus on teaching their children His Word: *“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

*“Hear, my son, your father’s instruction And do not forsake your mother’s teaching; Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent”* (Proverbs 1:8-10).

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:1-4).

## CHILDHOOD DISCIPLINE

Because of our fallen nature, sin is in the heart of all mankind. Our self-will expresses itself early in our youth and must be corrected before it creates a pattern for life.

*“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him”* (Proverbs 22:15).

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6).

*“The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother”* (Proverbs 29:15).

Discipline is not intended for punishment’s sake, but to correct and strengthen children to develop a disciplined life. In this light, parents must not use discipline unjustly.

*“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4).

## THE FAMILY OF GOD

Just as God created the natural family, He also created His spiritual family, but while the one proceeds through the natural creation, the other arrives by spiritual adoption through faith in Jesus Christ, for *“as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the*

*flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).*

*“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him” (1 John 3:1).*

*“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:14-17).*

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:3-6).*

*“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).*

*“You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reproved by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:4-11).*

*“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Ephesians 5:1-2). Amen.*