



The purpose of the family

Family camp Providence Reformed Church
Michawana

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“A global reading of the Bible on the purpose of the family”

1

The OT. The begin.

Genesis 1:26-28,

26. And God said, Let us **make man in our image**, after our likeness:

and **let them have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27. So **God created man in his own image**,

in the image of God created he him;

male and female created he them.

28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it:

and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

Gen 2:20 “I will make him an help meet for him.”

Conclusion ...

2

The OT. The fall and the first family.

- The fall
 - How Adam and Eve both played a role in the fall.
 - God's curse and the three-fold consequences for humanity. Gen 14-19
- The first family.
 - Gen 4:5, *"And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."*
 - Gen 4:8-9, *"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?"*
- Family life is ruined. Man is unable to fulfill her God-given task.

3

The OT. The fall, new begin, bankruptcy.

- The tragic reality.
 - Gen 6:5, *"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."*
- A new begin with the family of the righteous Noah.
 - Gen 9:1, *"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."*
- However. Scripture shows the bankruptcy of humanity and family life.
 - Gen 9:21-22, *"And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without."*

4

The OT. Abraham, covenant and the family.

- God promises. Covenant of grace with succeeding generations.
- Genesis 9:9, 17:1
- Genesis 18:18, *“For I know him (choose him), that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment, that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him.”*
- Circumcision

5

The OT. The fifth commandment.

- A new generation.
- Mount Sinai. The ten commandments on two tables.
- The fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12), bridge between the first and second table.
- *“Honor your father and your mother.”*
- And notice how this commandment is the first with a promise. *“That thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”*
- Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 9:1

6

The OT. The role of family life.

- Deuteronomy 6:1-9 *“Hear oh Israel: the LORD our God is One God. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.”*
- How does that work? *“And thou shall teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them, etc...”*
- See also Deuteronomy 6:20-25.
- Instruction Passover celebration. Exodus 12:21 and on.
- Dt 32:45-46, *“Set your hearts unto all the words which I testified among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.” “It shall prolong your days.”*
- Psalm 78:4, *“We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generations to come the praises of the LORD.”*
- Psalm 78:7-8, *“That they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments. And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.”*

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The OT. Some examples.

- Joshua in 24:15, *“As for me and my house (family), we will serve the LORD.”*
- Judges 2:10-11, *“And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he has done to Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim.”*
- 2 Kings 17:38-41, *“They served graven images, both their children and their children’s children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.”*
- David
- Solomon
- Ruth
- Proverbs 31
- So, the OT is full of instructions and examples of family life.

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The OT. Closing.

- Malachi 4:4-6,
- *“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.*
- *Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*
- *and he shall return the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smote the earth with a curse.”*

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The OT. Two concluding remarks.

- First. Time and again, the Old Testament emphasizes the importance of the family as a close-knit unit and communal care in the family.
 - Kain and Abel.
 - The fifth commandment
- Second. The Old Testament also speaks of a different family life.
 - God as Father and about Israel as His children.
 - The earthly family is, in the Old Testament, a picture of a spiritual reality.
 - In this sense, our family life depicts spiritual realities.
 - How important is our family life!

10

The NT. The beginning.

- Luke 1:16
- The angel of the Lord tells Zacharias about his son, John, and how in him this prophecy of Malachi would be fulfilled.
- Through his ministry, *"The hearts of the fathers will be turned toward their children, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*
- It's about a restored family life, so there will be a spiritual family!

11

The NT. Jesus.

- Mark 10:13-16 (and Mt 19 and Luke 18). *"Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."*
- Matthew 18:6, *"Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."*
- The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 versus Genesis 1:26-28
 - Gen. "Be fruitful and multiply" Mt 28, "Go ye therefore, and teach, baptizing them (Make disciples)".
 - Gen. "Replenish the earth" Mt 28, "All nations".
 - Gen. "Subdue it" Mt, 28 "Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commended you."

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The NT. Acts

- Acts 2:38-39. *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise (of the covenant) is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD shall call.”*
- *“whole houses or families”* are baptized when a father comes to faith.

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The NT. Conformation OT.

- Children are indeed the future of the church. Romans 9:29 (Isaiah 13:19), *“Except the LORD Sabbaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah.”*
- Emphasis on instruction of the children.
- See Ephesians 6:4, *“Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*
- And Colossians 3:20-21, *“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”*
- And 1 Timothy 3:4-5, *“One that ruleth well his own house (family), having his children in subjection with all gravity.”*
- Family members are “set apart”. 1 Corinthians 7:14. An unbelieving spouse and the children are *“sanctified”*, *“set apart”* through the believing spouse. *“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.”* How important the family is!
- We read often about “house churches”. For example Romans 6:5, *“Likewise greet the church that is in their house.”* But then again, in Colossians 4:15 and in 1 Corinthians 16:19.

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The NT. The family as spiritual entity.

- Matthew 12:46-50, *“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”*
- John 1:12-13, *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*
- Romans 8:15, *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”*
- In Galatians 3:26-29 *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”* (verse 26) and *“if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* (verse 29).
- Ephesians 5:21-33.

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Conclusion

- The family is central to God's plan to build a church here on earth.
- In the next topic, we will draw conclusions and focus on the practical consequences of our findings.

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Families are important to God

A few considerations:

- Family begins as an institution in paradise
- God’s image is represented in husband and wife together
- God-given task is to have dominion. So, humanity must multiply
- Lineages and houses are highlighted in Scripture. Many genealogies. E.g. Genesis 10 and 35, Matthew 1:2-16 and Luke 3:23-38.
- Covenant is made with individuals and their families (houses)
- Many clear instructions for family life.
- Many stories about families.

Conclusion. We must take family life seriously.

Question: What is the purpose of the family?

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1. The family portrays spiritual realities

First purpose. The family portrays spiritual realities and points us to God and His word.

A few considerations:

- Ephesians 6:22-33
- Revelation 19:7-9, 21:2 and 9
- God is called Father. E.g., Isaiah 63:16, 64:8, John 4:10, Phil 2:11
- God has a Son. E.g., John 3:16-17, Eph 1:3, Col 1:3
- God has a household (family), and children. E.g., John 14:2-3

Conclusion: The earthly family depicts a spiritual family

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1. Cont.

The earthly family has a high calling (representation).

- Aspects of the gospel and Christ's redemptive work are demonstrated in the family. See Ephesians 5:22-33
- Biblical truth is embodied in the family.
- Belonging to the spiritual family has priority. The earthly family is given as a means to that end (among others)

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2.The family as place to love God

Second purpose. The family is given to experience God's love and to learn to fear Him.

Some considerations (proof):

- We are created in God's image. This involves fellowship, love, reverence, obedience, honor and praise.
- Dt 6: *"Hear oh Israel: the LORD our God is One God. And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart."*
- Psalm 78:1-8, *"We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generations to come the praises of the LORD." "That they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."*
- Mark 1:13-16. *"Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."*

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2. Cont.

Conclusion. The family is the place where a sense of God's glory is instilled in the next generation.

- First table of the law. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38)
- We must be "born again".
- A famous Dutch pastor, psychologist, and pedagogue, dr. J. Waterink (1890-1966), wrote a book with the revealing title, *"By Mother's hand to Jesus"*.

The family is a school of faith (or theology). Knowledge of God and self. How to do so?

- Psalm 145:4-5, *"One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works."*
- Worked out in Psalm 145:4-12

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3. The family as place to love the neighbor

Third purpose. The family is given to care for each other in love

- Second table Ten Commandments. Mark 12:31, *“And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”*
- Family is a school of love or social relationships.
- Safe place of instruction, example, and practice (falling and getting up, failure and conflict)
- James 4:1, *“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”*
- The physical family is the most important building block to human society. Gives structure and order to society.

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4. Discipleship and evangelism center

The fourth purpose of the family. The family is given to teach and learn how to be a disciple of Christ, which is essential for the growth of God's Kingdom.

A few considerations:

- We have to fill the earth, beginning in families, as God's images, reflecting Him!
- The Great Commission is to make disciples of Christ until the ends of the earth. And
- Jesus himself affirmed how important children are.
- Mark 10:13-16, *“for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”*
- Matthew 18:6, *“Whose shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me,”*
- Psalms 78 and 145 make a clear connection between praising God from one generation to another generation and family life.

The conclusion is that the family is an institution of God to fill the earth with God-fearing generations.

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Implications

- Fathers and mothers must fulfill their role according to God's word. Keywords are self-sacrificial love and obedience.
- Children must love, obey, and honor their parents, according to Scripture.
- God is a God of order. Order in family life is important.
- Read and study the Bible.
- Apply the biblical truths to family life.
- Pray and sing together.
- Attend church together.
- Family members are open toward others outside of the family.
- The family members fear the Lord.

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Family worship and God's Word (1)

- Genesis 18:18 *"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."*
- Abraham. *"He built an altar unto the LORD."* (Gen 12:7, 13:4).
- Joshua 24:15, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"*
- David, 2 Sam 6:20, *"Then David returned to bless his household."*
- In Job 1:4-5 *"And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."*

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Family worship and God's Word (2)

- Jeremiah 10:25, *"Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name."* (Jer. 10:25)!
- 2 Timothy 3:15, *"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."*
- Ephesians 6:4, *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."*
- Psalms 78:5-7, *"For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: ⁶ That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: ⁷ That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."*

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Family worship. Why? (1)

1. God gave the family an essential place in his plan of creation and salvation. Given the purposes of the family, family worship is the most obvious thing to do.
2. God often uses a family to do something extraordinary in this world.
 - God chose the righteous Noah and his family to begin anew with mankind.
 - God set Abraham and his family apart to be a blessing to the world.
 - God gave the godly judge Samuel to the people of Israel in the family of Elkanah and Hannah.
 - God's only begotten Son was born into the family of Joseph and Mary.
 - Timothy was raised by his godly mother and grandmother.
 - Augustine, humanly speaking, was saved by his mother's prayers.
 - How true it is that God often works down the line of generations.

Indeed, God works through families, and this is an important reason to prioritize family worship in our families.

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Family worship. Why? (2)

3. Satan's attacks are always directed against God's word and families. These two belong together.
 - The first family in paradise
 - Eli, Samson
4. Quote: *"The devil hates the family because he hates the gospel of Jesus Christ. A mangled marriage communicates a mangled gospel; an unloving, selfish husband declares a loveless faith and lies about Christ's love for the church; an un-submissive wife represents the falsehood of an antinomian church; a rebellious child images a disobedient individual child of God. The devil is on a mission, hell-bent to destroy the glory of God and His everlasting kingdom wherever it exists, so he aims at the most important target: the gospel."*
5. As soon as families depart from God and His word, society immediately follows. The people of Israel. Our own contemporary society. (Matthew 16:18), *"The gates of hell will not prevail."* But...

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Godly man and family worship (1)

- Luther's prayers
- Quote, *"A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all the storms of heaven."*
- Arthur W. Pink wrote,
 - *"It is not enough that we pray as private individuals in our closets; we are required to honor God in our families as well.*
 - *At least twice each day, in the morning and in the evening, the whole household should be gathered together to bow before the Lord—parents and children, master and servant—to confess their sins, to give thanks for God's mercies, to seek His help and blessing.*
 - *Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this duty: all other domestic arrangements are to bend to it."*

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Godly man and family worship (2)

The Scottish Church in 1596 and 1638. The following questions were asked during visitation.

- *“Do the elders visit the families within the quarter and bounds assigned to each of them?*
- *Are they careful to have the worship of God set up in the families of their bounds? T*
- *he minister also is directed in his pastoral visits, to ask, ‘Whether God be worshipped in the family, by prayers, praises, and reading of the Scriptures?’*
- *Concerning the behavior of servants towards God and towards man; if they attend family and public worship?*
- *If there be catechizing in the family?”*

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Godly man and family worship (3)

A quote from J.W. Alexander,

“In general,” says Neander in a work not published among us,

- *“They followed the Jews, in observing the three seasons of day, nine, twelve, and three o’clock, as special hours of prayer; yet they did not use these in a legal manner, such as militated against Christian liberty; for Tertullian says, in regard to times of prayer, ‘nothing is prescribed, except that we may pray at every hour, and in every place.’*
- *The Christians began and closed the day with prayer.*
- *Before meals, before the bath, they prayed, for as Tertullian says, the ‘refreshment and nourishment of the soul must precede the refreshment and nourishment of the body; the heavenly before the earthly.’*
- *When a Christian from abroad, after brotherly reception and hospitality in the house of a brother Christian, took his leave, he was dismissed from the Christian family with prayer, ‘Because,’ said they, ‘In thy brother thou hast beheld thy Lord.’*
- *For every affair of ordinary life they made preparation by prayer.”*

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Family worship. Practical advice

- The leader is the father as the head of the house.
- Prepare. Pray. Study. Gather materials (Bibles, Psalter books, etc.)
- Match family worship to the age of your children. Ready materials.
- Hold family worship around the table.
- Find time(s) daily to perform the duty of family worship.
- Be consistent in family worship. Don't make it too long.
- Always combine Bible reading and teaching with prayers and the singing of psalms or hymns.
- In the prayers, confess the sins of the family, consider the needs of the family, make intercession for others, and praise God for His blessings on the family and those around us.

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Recommended literature

I used, among others, the following sources. Most of the quotes in these sheets come from "*A Theology of the Family.*"

- Andreas J. Kostenberger. *God, marriage, and family*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010
- Scott T. Brown. *A Theology of the Family*. Wake Forest, NC: The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2014

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