

Faith, Family, and Freedom - the Cultural Mandate

“Marriage, Part 2: Family”

Genesis 1:28 ESV

When we score a touchdown in our faith life and things are going good, or when we have a spiritual victory or a breakthrough - after prayer was answered - that's when we tend to drop our guard, because we like to celebrate the win. But we have to celebrate our wins with our guard *up*, because as soon as we *drop* our guard, the enemy wants to come in and hit us with a left hook. We tend to be vulnerable after a spiritual win. Last week we said that marriage is God's design to change a community, to turn a state, to restore a nation to the foot of the cross, but also *family* is God's design to change a community, to turn a state, to restore a nation to the foot of the cross. *Family* is the only human institution - marriage, and subsequently *family* - that God created and spoke a blessing over.

Genesis 1:28 ESV

“And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

Other translations say, *“Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and govern it.”* We've been given the ability and we are *empowered* to govern and rule in this earth, and it's important that we do that where we live, where we work and where we play, but *starting at the kitchen table*. We all have challenges with our families, but breakthroughs come the moment we're able to admit we're not perfect, because we can hang in there pretty well by faking it, and even by trying to do the right thing. We might think we've left all our past baggage behind, and we *want* to move forward, but until we actually “own it” and repent, nothing will change.

Ephesians 4:31-32 ESV

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

That's the idea of practicing “radical forgiveness.” It works best when we're both doing it. It's more difficult and more challenging when only one is doing it.

What Christ has done in us and how he has forgiven us, now empowers us, and enables us to do the same for others. The grace we so require from God is also the same grace we must release to others. The mercy that we need from God is the same mercy we have to release to others, and it's the same for the fact that we are so radically forgiven. We realize we could have been sentenced to hell to for any *one* of the things we've done in the past, yet God in his goodness and his grace forgave *us*, even though we didn't deserve it. We now have to re-release that to *each other*.

One of the things that comes up regularly is trying to find forgiveness for ourself. A lot of times, when we've been through a divorce or we've been through hard challenges in our life, or we've made bad choices, we're good about realizing our need to forgive *other* people that have wronged *us*, but we have a harder time forgiving ourself because we continue to walk in *shame* in areas of our life. We may have put it aside and not even thought about it until something comes up and then all of a sudden we're like, *"Oh, you know, I don't think I've ever forgiven myself for that because it's still it's a trigger in my life that keeps coming up."*

Sometimes when that happens, it's because God wants to expose that area of our life where we can give it to him and say, *"God, I forgive this person for this situation, but Father, I need to forgive myself for my part in this. Father, help me to forgive myself."* And that's the power of God unto salvation, to forgive us. He gives us the power to do that. There are people in our lives that may have hurt us horribly and we think can't forgive them. *But, we can* if we're in Christ, because God gives us the *power* to do it, and we have to really sink ourself into the power he gives us, not what we do on our own.

It's something we have to remind ourselves of. When we speak, there's power in what we say. Words matter. Words are powerful. Words are power containers. And when we release them into the atmosphere, we also release them not only for us to hear our own words and remind ourselves, for Heaven to hear our words, but also for *hell* to hear our words. And we can do that and actually do battle in that. So we forgive ourselves out loud - *"Father, in the name of Jesus and by your power, I, by faith, forgive and release myself. I let go. I'm going to stop punishing myself for what You've already forgiven me for."* And then there's a release that happens.

One of the things we realize is that spiritual warfare is being waged upon families - upon the family. Whether we know it or not, we're under attack. It's even more dangerous when we *don't* know it - when we're not *aware*, because we can't defend something that we don't even understand is *happening* to us.

Satan hates and detests anything and anyone whose primary or sole purpose is to honor, relate to, and glorify God. That's because we have been created for *relationship* with God - it's why he created us. He brought us into this amazing relationship and this opportunity, but it got fouled up in the Garden early on, and we've been in recovery ever since. But because of Jesus Christ, we now have been connected to him, and we've been made right just as we were in the Garden even before the fall. It's important that we understand that we're under attack whether we know it or not.

In John 10:10, Jesus says, *"I came that you may have life and have it abundantly."* That's pretty awesome, but just before that, he says, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy."* Who's the thief? - the devil - *Satan*. Satan comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. We know Jesus came to bring life and life more abundantly, but if we don't receive that life, we'll just be dwelling in the first half of that verse instead of the second half.

Ephesians 6:12 ESV

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

Our war is not against one another. Our war is not with our spouse or our kids, even though it sometimes feels like it. If we live unaware of it, then we don't know where these hits are coming from, and we'll assume they're coming from our spouse - we'll assume the voices in our head are *ours* because Satan sounds a lot like us. And if we're not careful and we don't know what the target is, we'll shoot at one another. We have to realize there's a bigger thing going on.

"We live in a world at war. Spiritual attack must be a category we think in or we will misunderstand more than half of what happens in our marriage." - John Eldridge.

It's important to understand that there's a real devil, there's a real heaven, and a real hell. And the devil will do anything he can to cause us to walk away from the things that God wants to do in our life, or from people he wants to put in our life, and he'll do anything he can to distract us so that we won't live for God. Because if we live for God, we're going to live life more abundantly, but that doesn't happen without satanic forces coming against us.

We have to stay in the Word, because that's what gives us it's our food for the day. Imagine fasting every single day or maybe eating one meal a week - what would happen to our body? We must understand that it's the same with the Word of God. We have to have it to live and to be able to overcome the enemy because the enemy is coming against us all the time.

We live in a modern world where there's a tendency to think that anything supernatural seems odd. It seems weird to us because we're "realists" here in America. We're western thinkers. We don't think in terms of spiritual realms and hierarchies, and yet most of the world understands and has a category for spiritual warfare. They have a category for that which is otherworldly and they don't have any problem believing it. It's we who are so "civilized," smart, and advanced that live in this world that's reasonable and rational. Therefore, to think that there's actually a real devil with hordes of demons who are constantly attacking us sounds archaic and ridiculous.

Yet, that's exactly his strategy. If he can get us to *not* believe that he's real, he's already won. He can punch us and we won't even know where it came from. We'll think it was our wife, our co-worker, or our boss. And then we'll begin to live paranoid because all these hits are coming out of "nowhere." We'll try to explain it with rational thought. We live in a fallen world. We're already behind the line on some things. And the enemy leverages that in order to keep us on the defensive, but we can't defend ourselves if we don't know where the hits are coming from.

2 Corinthians 10:3 ESV

"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh."

The enemy is not people who are left-leaning in their political ideologies, the Democrats, or the people that don't have biblical views. It's not a *person* at all, but an *entity* that is evil and dark and wants to kill us. The enemy is not people who are left, right, center, or anything else. It's not black, white, brown, yellow or something in-between. The enemy is a dark, malevolent being who is hell-bent on destroying our relationship with God. And he starts by destroying the family. If he can destroy our marriage and our family, he can destroy a nation. The nation will come apart because the family is the *glue* for the nation.

1 Peter 5:8-9 ESV

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

All men were designed by God to provide for and to protect the family. Even if they're not married yet, there are still people that God puts in their life that are the fabric of family for them. And their role is to guard, protect, and to provide, and they have to be aware of the real enemy.

Five Pillars of a Godly Home

1] Christ as the Foundation This is first and foremost. If Christ is not our foundation, then we are building on sand, and cracks will develop in the foundation and then get transferred to the whole structure.

Psalm 127:1 ESV - *"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."*

We are here to co-operate with God. We work side by side with him to build a home that will last and can take the punishment.

Matthew 7:24-25 ESV

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Building on a solid foundation - and that foundation is Jesus.

2] Unity and Order in the Home Praise God for strong wives who love Jesus and who do their quiet time and who are faithful and teach our kids. God established men as the head of the home. It's positional authority and he's given it to them so they can lead the home. We need to pull our family together and pray for our meals, read a verse of scripture to our wife. Take a baby step - pray before turning the light off at night when going to bed.

Wives, come alongside of him and hold his arms up. Don't make fun of him, mock him, or think, *"Well, he tried this before, but it didn't last."* We're all a work in-progress. You have to raise him up. You have to respect him. You have to show love and honor to him so that he will rise up as that leader God intended him to be.

Ephesians 5:21 ESV - *"Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

The real beauty of it is, it's *mutual*. It says submitting to "one another" out of reverence for Christ.

3] Raising Children in the Faith Children need to see unity among the husband and wife - their parents. They need to see forgiveness when there's mistakes made. They need to see love. It's so important after we get a revelation of what God wants of us as a mother and a father that we raise our kids in a godly home and in the faith.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 ESV - *"These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children..."*

Proverbs 22:6 ESV

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Circumstances get more complicated, but the remedy doesn't. The remedy is as simple as following Scripture, but, we may not see an instant change. We have a responsibility to take these words that God has imparted to us and teach our children and lead them, regardless of the opinions of others. We lead, trusting that God is ordering our steps, and we're simply being obedient to him. We pray and pray till we see the answer, but a lot of times it's not us that are the catalyst for them coming to Christ, but it's someone else, usually in their sphere of influence. So always pray for their friends and acquaintances that they will have the right answer for them, and bring Truth to them.

4] The Family's Mission: Reflect Christ to the World God didn't just give us families to make us better. He gave us families to reflect him to the world, to reflect his glory, and to reflect his life. When we live our lives understanding grace and mercy, understanding there's a throne that's made entirely out of grace, then we will boldly approach it.

Joshua 24:15 ESV - *“But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

Matthew 5:14-16 ESV - *“You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

5] Prayer and Presence of the Holy Spirit Pray and believe and trust and begin to cultivate the soil of our own heart and the seedbed for our family. Whether married or not, we can pray for our families.

Acts 2:39 ESV - *“For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off...”*

Romans 12:12 ESV - *“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer”.*

Prayer

Father, thank You for the privilege of having this conversation today. Lord, by Your Holy Spirit, seal what's been shared. And Father, may we all never let go of hope in Your Word. It is never too late to change direction. It's never too late to become the man, the father, the woman, or the mother of God that our families need. So we ask for mercy and grace to help in our time of need for our families. In Jesus' name. Amen