

Parenthood

Lesson 1

God's Purpose for the Family: Common Perspectives and the Biblical Portrait¹

COMMON PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN TODAY

1. Obstacles
2. Idols
3. Tools

THE BIBLICAL PORTRAIT

Scripture teaches that a primary purpose of the family is to present the whole world with a series of three images—images of God himself, the gospel, and the church.

1. A Portrait of God's Own Nature

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth" (Gen. 1:26–28).

"It is as if God said, 'I created the first and original pair of human beings in my very image, and I could continue creating them unilaterally so that you would have no part to play. But instead, you are now to bring about human beings; you are to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with my greatest of all creations, humans made in my very image'" (Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*, 58).

¹ In addition to the resources cited, this course was developed in part from the "Parenthood" core seminar at Capitol Hill Baptist Church (Washington, D.C.), John Kimbell's "Biblical Parenting" class at Clifton Baptist Church (Louisville, KY), Randy Stinson's "Leadership and Family Ministry" class at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, KY), the "Biblical Family" class at Maranatha Bible Church (Comstock Park, MI), and Rick Anderson's "Parenting Helps" at Faith Community Church (Oxnard, CA).

Parenthood

Lesson 1

2. A Portrait of the Gospel

“When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then God has made you an heir” (Gal. 4:4–7).

“If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all” (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 201).

3. A Portrait of the Church

“I write these things to you, hoping to come to you soon. 15 But if I should be delayed, I have written so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:14–15).

“Don’t rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters with all purity” (1 Tim. 5:1–2).

“The designation ‘brother’ is so common in the epistles that it seems to be the predominant way in which the New Testament authors refer to the other Christians to whom they are writing. This indicates the strong consciousness they had of the nature of the church as the family of God” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 741).

OBJECTION: WHAT ABOUT OUR SIN?

1. *Even in the midst of our various failures as a family to live up to God’s purposes, we still point to these realities.*
2. *The family is not the final or fundamental revelation about these matters. God’s Word is.*
3. *Although all families fall short of perfection, God is in the process of conforming believers into the image of his Son.*

PREPARATION FOR NEXT LESSON:

- Read “A Theology of the Home” by John Tweeddale at ligonier.org/learn/articles/theology-home