

BF&M 18: THE FAMILY

Memory Verse: *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ."* Ephesians 4:32

The Family is Foundational

The BFM article on the family was added by the SBC in 1998. Up until very recent times, confessions of faith for the most part did not see the need for a statement about the family, since Christians down through the centuries were united in a common understanding of God's plan for marriage, children, and the family. However, the view of family that was taken for granted for centuries has been challenged in our day.

Marriage, instituted before the F_____, was a central part of God's design for mankind from the beginning, **Gen. 2:23-24**. According to the BFM, the family "is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption." All people—married or unmarried—are thus related to family through various ties of blood, kinship, and adoption. We are husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, as well as part of a larger extended family. However, as the b_____ and t_____ conception of marriage has come under attack in recent years, it is also necessary to define what marriage is.

One Man and One Woman

"Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime," **Matthew 19:4-6; Rom. 7:2**. This simple but important statement about marriage forbids h_____, p_____, and d_____ (except in those cases that God clearly allows). God honored marriage by establishing the metaphor of the bridegroom and the bride to express the relationship between Christ and His church. Christ's redeemed people are described as the bride, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom (see **Rev. 19:7**). This metaphor helps us understand the i_____, p_____, and o_____ that are to characterize earthly marriages.

The Bible establishes marriage as the only proper arena for and channel of sexual expression. Thus, God's wonderful gift of sex is invested in marriage and the one-flesh relationship that is established between a husband and wife. The shared gift of intimacy, which is a b_____ to a husband and a wife within the marital covenant, can only lead to d_____ and h_____ outside marriage. Ultimately, God will judge all defiling of the purity of gift of sex as He intended it within marriage, **Hebrews 13:4**.

Equal and Complementary

The BFM affirms that both "husband and wife are of equal worth before God" and explains that both the man and the woman are created in God's image. The apostle Paul affirmed that in our salvation through Christ all are equal, **Galatians 3:28**. However, equal before God does not mean that there are no differences in roles and responsibilities. In Ephesians 5:22-33, the apostle Paul teaches that

there are clear responsibilities given to men and women in marriage. The husband, Paul writes, is the h_____ of the wife as Christ is the head of the church (v. 23). Thus, the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and g_____ h_____ u__ for her (25). Likewise, the wives are to s_____ to their own husbands as to the Lord (v. 22). These roles and responsibilities are the expression of God's d_____ and plan for the marriage relationship. They are not an expression of in_____. Just as in the Godhead, there is equality among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, but there are differences in roles and in functions. For example, there is the v_____ s_____ of the Son to the Father in the accomplishment of the plan of redemption, **John 6:38; Heb. 10:5-7.**

The Blessing of Children

Society's view of children is another area where there has been a recent deviation from biblical truth. In the Bible, barrenness, the inability for a woman to conceive a child, was considered a c_____ (see Sarah and Hannah as examples). Children were a b_____ to be desired, **Psalm 127:3-5.** The BFM reflects this view in its statement, "Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord." This is a far cry from the common view of children as a nuisance or a burden, along with the attitude that many children equals many sorrows. Christians today must resist the shaping influence of a world that makes parenthood a burden rather than a blessing.

Being a parent does involve sober and serious responsibilities. The BFM states that "Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth." This requires a c_____ to biblical truth above c_____ norms. It means that fathers and mothers must k_____ the Scriptures and make them the standard for attitudes and actions. Parents must be i_____ and p_____ in cultivation loving relationships with their children and in teaching them—in word and in deed—the word of God. Christian parents must live the gospel, teach the gospel, and pray the gospel for the conversion and growth of their children. The c_____ is called to equip and assist parents in this responsibility, but the primary job belongs to Mom and Dad.

"Children are to honor and obey their parents." The Bible teaches that each individual is personally responsible to God. This includes children. When they are very young, children will generally be as obedient as their parents t_____ and especially d_____ them to be. God has given parents means by which they can cultivate obedience and respect, and c_____ is key. However, ultimately, children are also fallen creatures who resist authority and want to be "like God" (Gen. 3:5). Only the Holy Spirit can change hearts and grant new birth through the gospel. God will hold children accountable for their obedience or disobedience to His Word, for their acceptance or rejection of the salvation freely offered in Christ.

A Final Word

We live in a time when the definition of *family* is a matter of political and social controversy and when the culture is confused about the definition of *marriage*. Christians bear the unique responsibility to tell the truth, to live the truth, and to bear witness to God's loving intention in establishing marriage and the family for our good. God gave us marriage and family for our happiness and our health, but He also created them as structures of accountability so that we can live holy lives, demonstrating His character, love, and wisdom as we fulfill all the responsibilities and roles assigned to marriage and the family (*The Baptist Faith & Message, Kelley, Land, & Mohler, 172*).

