

We are family

As we look around this world of ours and see what we are doing to family relationships in all spheres. Governments are redefining the way in which families and relationships are brought about, more and more individuals are choosing to live together and bring up their children outside of marriage, more and more families are breaking up and the children are spending divided time with both parents. People are being bombarded with views about sexuality such that they don't really know who they are or what to believe.

Is this what God intended when He created man and woman? There are two aspects to the title of our talk this morning, I believe. There is the human family which God intended for the procreation of families to fill the earth and there is the Spiritual family, our relationship as Christians with God and with each other.

I want to look at the human family first and see what I believe God intended for it to be. There are those who would say that what I am about to say is homophobic in today's society but I believe that it is what God intended and what He told us in Scripture to do.

If we believe that Scripture is the inspired word of God in its original form, which is what our statement of belief says, and if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God sent to earth to take our sin on His shoulders then I believe that we should be following what Scripture has to say about family rather than some of the things which have become popular in recent years in society generally.

So I want to look at Scripture and see if we can identify God's desire for family living. We won't always get it right because we're human and we fail sometimes but that shouldn't stop us desiring to meet God's standards as best we are able.

Where does God begin?

In Genesis 2: 21-24 we read this:

"So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of 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, for she was taken out of man."

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh."

As Christians we believe that God created heaven and earth as we are told in the story of Genesis. We also believe that He created the creatures and all living things on the earth and gave man dominion over them(Gen 1:28-29).

We also believe again as we read in Genesis that the union of man and woman would produce children to populate the earth (Gen 3: 16-20, Gen4:12).

We were made for relationships: for the intimate union of man and woman as husband and wife, for sacrificial caring love in families, for the rich stimulation of friendships. We were made to talk and listen, to think deep thoughts, to create beauty together and to work alongside each other as partners in the care of our children and of God's earth. This and many other things because we were made in God's image (Gen 1:27)

This was God's intention when He created man and woman.

The Bible is littered with little gems about family and children and relationships between husband and wife, I want to take just a few minutes to look at some of them

As parents we are expected to bring our children up , providing for them and instilling good moral values into them;

Proverbs 22:6 tells us, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Psalms 127: 3-4 says: "Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from Him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them."

Much is expected of husbands and fathers in the Bible :

Ephesians 5:25

"Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"

For those who are married, is your love for your wife such that you would be prepared to die to protect her?

In Colossians 3: 19 and 21 we read,

"Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them"

and

"Fathers do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged."

It is a husband's responsibility to love and care for his wife and not to be cruel or hurtful to her. Similarly father's are to encourage and uplift their children, not discourage them and harm them physically or mentally so that they are broken and low in spirit.

Wives too are mentioned frequently:

"Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also and he praises her, " Many women do noble things but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." (Proverbs 31:28-30)

One for husbands and children to remember:

"She speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue." (Prov 31:26)

Children are also given instructions in the Bible with a fair amount of it stressing respect for parents, something not always obvious in today's society..

Proverbs 1:8 says,

"Listen my son to your father's instructions and do not forsake your mother's teaching"

Exodus 20:12 says ,

"Honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord, your God, is giving you."

And Jesus famously said when the disciples were turning them away,

"Let the children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. And He took the children in His arms put His hands on them and blessed them."

Children were extremely important to Jesus.

The family as a whole is, as we've seen, extremely important to God and in these days when the family unit seems to be getting more and more fragile what is it that the Bible says that binds it all together. The love of God. God didn't just invent love as I've said before, God is love and as we saw earlier we are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) then it is only logical that love is a vital part of our makeup.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 tries to put into words what that God love is and to an extent succeeds but I'm sure he didn't feel fully satisfied with what he'd written when he'd finished because God's love is so vast and awesome that no words that we can use are ever going to be adequate to describe it and as were told in Romans 8:26 (Amp)

"In the same way the Spirit [comes to us and] helps us in our weakness. We do not know what prayer to offer or how to offer it as we should, but the Spirit Himself [knows our need and at the right time] intercedes on our behalf with sighs and groaning too deep for words"

I wonder if Paul as he finished 1 Corinthians 13 was assisted by the Holy Spirit with sighs and groans to express his innermost thoughts to God, too intense to express in human language?

This is what Paul managed to express in language:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude it is not self seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails...

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

God created us for relationship; relationship with each other in loving family units, a mum, a dad and children; each loving and caring for and respecting each other, we don't always get it right but God is eager to forgive and move us on rather than admonish us, we just need to ask with sincerity of heart.

But most of all God created us for relationship with Him. He wanted that so much and loved us so much that He was prepared, following the fall of Adam and Eve and the severing of our intimate relationship with Him, to send His one and only Son, Jesus, to die and to take our sin upon His shoulders, in order that that intimate relationship could be restored and Jesus, having gloriously been raised from death and ascended to the right hand of the Father is able to intercede on our behalf and bring us into god's presence once more.

That is love in action!

But that loving act brought us so much more as well; we have become children of God when we accept with sincerity the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and believe on him in faith.

Our relationship with God is to be higher than our relationship with our earthly families. First God and then my wife and children. Some are quite shocked when you tell them that but it can be no other way. God created us in his likeness to love and worship Him and that comes first. It doesn't mean we love our families less but God comes first.

What does loving God mean, what does being a child of God mean?

Again far too vast a subject and we would quickly run out of words to describe it but there are some hints in the Bible that give us glimpses of what it means:

God's love:

"Give thanks to the God of gods, for His steadfast love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever to him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever. "
Psalm 136:2-3

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

"But God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved."
Eph 2:4-5.

"This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." 1 John 4:10

And perhaps most well known of all:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Being children of God:

Being a child of God is an exciting place to be! Here are just a few verses to get you going:

John 1:12

“But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God”

Galatians 3:26

“For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.”

Romans 8:16-17

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with Him ”

Eph 1:5

“God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.”

2 Cor 6: 17-18

“I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

And there are so many more! Just Google “God’s love” or Being a Child of God” and you’ll see just how many!!

But how can we receive these promises if we are not yet believing Christians?

Matthew 6:33 says this:

“Seek the kingdom of God above all else and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.”

Note “need” not desire or wish for as some would tell you but “need”

Seek God’s kingdom, accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour with a sincere and contrite heart and all of the above can be yours as well. They come as part of the package. Will it make life easier. Not always, God doesn’t promise an easy passage, but He does promise He will be there with you every step of the way. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Is it worth it?

Paul seems to think so. He tells us in **Philippians 3: 7- 11** having extolled the virtues he had in earthly terms this:

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His suffering, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Are you a part o God’s family? Are you a co-heir with Christ ? Are you adopted as God’s son or daughter? If not know is perhaps the time to start thinking about it. And as more people become part of God’s family and start to raise Godly families of their own then this world which God provided and we have scarred so badly might just start to heal itself again with God’s help and blessing.

“ If my people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

2 Chron 7:14 (KJV)

AMEN.