

## **GOD'S ORDER FOR THE FAMILY**

When an artist creates a work of art, it is intended to be an expression and reflection of the thoughts, intentions, ideas, and even personality of the artist. Thus, from the work of art, we are able to know quite a bit about the artist. When the artist, on the other hand, comes personally and explains what his or her intentions and purposes were when the work of art was created, we are able to know even more about the artist.

God has done this both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. God's Word, the Scripture, is the written revelation of God himself made complete in his Son, Jesus Christ. God, the artist, came to explain the purpose and the intention of his creation, and we can know more about his nature and personality than would have been possible just from observing his artwork.

When God created the world, he expressed order, purpose, and variety as his aspects (1). He showed creation to be not haphazard and accidental but purposeful and under the control of an Intelligent Being.

When God created man, he saw that it was not good for him to be alone. So he gave him a suitable helper and mate, woman (2), and told them to multiply and become family (3). In their unique creation, they revealed personality, the ability to create, and interrelationship as additional aspects of God.

In creation, God revealed order: material creation was to help and serve the human beings who were over it but who themselves were to be under God who created them. In the family, God was to be over the man, the man was to be over the woman, they both were to be over the children, and they all were to be over the rest of creation (4). They were given the very authority and dominion of God over all creation (5) and were commissioned to reveal and to be an extension of God as Family.

The man was to reflect all the attributes of God the Father: the ability to beget, to rule over, and to provide for. Man, his wife, and their children were to bear a family resemblance to their Father, God (6). They were to do this, however, in total obedience and submission to God (7). Thus:

GOD - Entirely superior in nature and position to man and creation

MAN (ADAM) - Dominant in position, equal in nature and supernature to woman. Adam (man) was created first.

WOMAN (FROM ADAM) - Subordinate in position under man, equal in nature and supernature to man. Helpmate to Adam (man).

CHILDREN - Subordinate in position under father and mother, equal in nature and supernature to mother and father.

CREATION - Thoughts, desires, and other things (The World). Under the dominion of humans.

When the man submitted himself to the woman under him (8), instead of to God over him, he disrupted God's order. He did not exercise his proper authority under God over her when he accepted her suggestion. This was his additional act of disobedience to God's order. On her part, she did not submit her decision to her husband before she disobeyed.

This was her additional sin, in addition to her disobedience to God's command.

Sin, therefore, came from two areas: 1) her disobedience to God and his submission to her and to her act of disobedience, and 2) their failure to exercise their positions as God had established them. Family, then, became a reflection of man's disorder instead of God's order. With disorder in the family came disorder in the world. Thus:

CREATION - Thoughts, desires, and things (The World). Exercise control over humans.

CHILDREN - Rebellious, disobedient to parents, self-centered.

WOMAN – Not submitted, "liberated" in wrong sense, self-centered, afraid to discipline children.

MAN – Not submitted to God, domineering, self-centered, afraid to discipline wife and children.

GOD - Irrelevant, not considered in decision making, ignored.

So it still is today. Neither the world nor the Church can be any stronger than the families that make it up. The critical need today is the restoration of God's order within the family. To do that, we must see and understand God as Family.

When Noah built the ark, he did it according to the pattern that God gave him (9). When Moses built the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant, he was ordered to do it according to the pattern that God showed him (10). The pattern for the family that God has given us is the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the holy Spirit - separate and distinct Persons but one intimate and indissoluble unity. The family is intended to be the primary reflection of the order that exists within the Godhead

That order consists of an interrelationship of authority, mutual submission, and love between and among interdependent Persons. It is the proper functioning of this order between man and woman in the world that makes marriage and, when children are begotten, family. That is why God hates divorce. It is a destruction of the intimate and indissoluble unity of husband and wife that is to be reflected in marriage and then in the family.

God called Abraham and continued the process of revealing the basic nature and life of the Godhead as Family. The promise to Abraham, that he was to be the father of many nations and that his descendants would be as numerous as the sands of the seashore and the stars of the heavens (11), was an expression of the will and purpose of God the Father himself - to beget many spiritual children. God's own desire was to enlarge his family by sharing his life with human beings.

As in the beginning, the family of God was to be the fruit of obedience to and trust in the authority of the Father. Once more, God revealed himself as Father, and his children were to be a people called by his name, identified as begotten by him, and bearing his resemblance. The family was to reflect the intimate nature and relationship of God as Family. Through family, God would once again restore human beings to full authority and dominion over creation.

When God called his children out of Egypt, he began to reveal two other aspects of his

Fatherhood - his position as ruler and as provider. Through Moses, God established for himself *his* rightful authority over human rulers. Through his people, he began to restore *their* rightful authority under him over all creatures and nations. The family of God as a whole, as well as in the individual members, was to reflect the rulership of God over all creation. But it was through the individual families, clans, and tribes that God would extend and build up his own family.

Through the fire (12), the cloud (13), the water from the rock (14), the quail (15), and the manna (16), God revealed himself as a Father who provides for all human needs. Never once in their wandering in the desert did any of God's family lack food and provision (17). Even their shoes and clothing did not wear out during their years of wandering (18).

The whole Old Testament, more than anything else, is the story of God the Father's attempt to restore his family by bringing his children into obedience to his rulership and trust in his provision so that they could reflect his nature as Family. Through obedience and submission to the Law, which reflected the authority and love of the Father, the man could once more reflect the order within the Godhead and regain his position as ruler over and provider for his own family.

At its best, however, the human family was only a poor reflection of what God desired. It was, and is, only in and through Jesus Christ that the full revelation of God as Family came. God revealed himself as Father, and the Godhead as Family, when he said, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (19). Because Jesus is revealed as Son, we know God fully as Father. He it is who shows us the Father, for he said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (20). He alone bore the true resemblance to his Father by his total obedience and submission even to his death on a cross (21).

He is the Son, under the authority of the Father, who does only what he sees the Father doing (22) and says only what he hears the Father saying (23).

He is the Son, who shows us that it is only through submission and obedience that a man can exercise true authority over his own family and within the family of God, the Church.

He is the Son, who tells us that, before our family can reflect the true order of his Family, we must be begotten from above, that is, by his Father (24). We are born of our parents unto disorder. We must be born again of God and become his sons and daughters if we are to become true fathers and mothers (25).

Being married in a church doesn't make our marriage and family Christian or Godly. We must individually accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and the Lord of our own personal life and then of our marriage and family. Making him the central third-party to our marriage unites our family with his Family through the holy Spirit. In this way, our family becomes the highest reflection and extension of the Trinity, and God can accomplish his plan and purpose through our family on the earth. In this kind of family, in turn, our children can discover and develop their true identity as persons called and gifted by the Father, saved and restored by the Son, and empowered and sent forth by the holy Spirit to accomplish the will of the Father for them.

So it is that God the Father continues in our day to extend his Family on the earth. Humanity's most desperate cry today is for real family. Our deepest, innermost search is for the Father because only a true father can provide the strength, leadership, and provision that give us security. We must become the fathers and the family that God desires and intends for us to be!

The world cannot be any better than the families that make it up. The Church will never be any stronger than the families under Christ within it. Satan knows this and is putting forth every effort as never before to destroy the family.

Witness the high divorce rate.

Witness the absence of fathers and the number of families trying to be held together by mothers who are not uniquely equipped by God to be fathers also.

Witness what is happening to our children as a result. Homosexuality and lesbianism are not an accident but the result of the inability of a child to discover and to develop its true identity without a true father model. Both the male and the female need the father *and* the mother to develop a healthy, integrated personality.

Witness the destruction of potential family members through abortion. God the Father never delegated the right and authority to do this to a woman, her parents, her husband, if she has one, her boyfriend, her doctor, our lawmakers, or the court!

Nor, for that matter, did God the Father delegate the right and authority to couples to prevent conception through artificial means of birth control. He did give couples the right to make decisions with him about family size and to use natural means to bring this about. However God is the *sole* author of life! The same attitude that claims the right to *prevent* birth artificially is the same one that claims the right to *terminate* it through abortion. We are to cooperate with him but have *no* right or authority to block his ability to create life through us by means of artificial devices, pills, or creams.

Yes, the most critical need today is the restoration of God's order within the family! God's purpose in the Garden of Eden, thwarted by man's and woman's disobedience, is to be the goal of God's restoration of all things in Christ, the obedient Son. As Head of the Christian marriage, he restores order to the family. Through our obedience to him, he teaches us love for and submission to the Father. However we must also let the holy Spirit of unity-in-love seal our marriage and our family as never before. If God's order is not reflected in our family, to that extent it will never be reflected in the world or in the Church.

The Trinity is a Family in order! The family founded on God reflects the authority, submission, and love between and among interdependent persons that exist within the Trinity. This is God's will for us, his people. As we accept his will, we become in our day the reflection and extension of the Family who is God. In our truly Christian family, we discover and develop our true identity in Christ as his brothers and sisters and as sons and daughters of his Father. Can there be a higher calling?

(1) Genesis 1:1-2:4

(14) Exodus 17:6

- (2) Genesis 2:18, 21-24
- (3) Genesis 2:27-28
- (4) Genesis 3:16
- (5) Genesis 1:26, 28;  
Psalm 8
- (6) Genesis 1:27
- (7) Genesis 3:2-3
- (8) Genesis 3:17
- (9) Genesis 6:14-16
- (10) Exodus 25:8-9
- (11) Genesis 17:4-8;  
22:17-18
- (12) Exodus 13:21
- (13) Exodus 12:22; Numbers 9:15-23
- (15) Numbers 11:31-32
- (16) Exodus 16:3-18
- (17) Exodus 16:35;
- (18) Deuteronomy 29:5
- (19) Matthew 17:5
- (20) John 14:9b
- (21) Philippians 2:6-11
- (22) John 5:19-20, 30, 36b
- (23) John 8:28; 13; 49-50
- (24) John 3:3,5
- (25) John 3:6 & 7