

Running Your Family By the Book

(preached 10/12/14; Pine Grove BC Sunday PM)

Introduction

The Northern White Rhinoceros is one of the most endangered species of animal in the world.

In January of 2014, there were only 6 in the entire world.

2 at the San Diego Zoo and 6 at a zoo in the Czech Republic.

2 of those in the Czech republic were taken to Kenya in hopes of reintroducing them to the wild..

So that they would reproduce.

Well, a male and a female were released into Kenya on a large plantation.

To enjoy the freedom, but this species is so endangered that there are guards who stand watch over them 24 hours a day...

To protect them from hunters who would like to kill them.

That is the length that some people will go to see a species of animal preserved.

Well, there is another endangered species that I want to mention tonight as we begin a series on the family.

And you won't find this species on any list of endangered animals, but the people who belong to this group are becoming more and more rare.

Unfortunately, no one is standing guard over them 24 hours a day.

No one even seems to care if they go extinct.

And there are even people in the world who even like to see them go extinct.

So, what is this species?

Well, I am not talking about an animal species.

Instead, I am talking about the family as defined by God.

Where a man and a woman leave their parents are united in marriage, have children, raise those children in a Christian home and are not parted until death.

Examples of that type of family are getting harder to find than a northern White Rhinoceros.

And even worse than that, no one is standing guard to protect this God-ordained way of life.

In fact, our world is working hard to wipe this endangered species off the map.

If you watch the news with a biblical worldview, you will see the destruction of the family day after day right before our very eyes.

I never thought I would be old enough to use this phrase...

“But back in the day when I was growing up, most of my friends came from a two parent family.”

I was not on that list since my parents divorced when I was 6..

But just 30 short years ago, for the most part, the idea of family being a husband and wife who stayed married and raised their children under the same roof was still the standard.

However, in my lifetime, that idea has been radically changing.

It is now normal to live together before marriage.

It is now normal to divorce your spouse not once but multiple times.

It is now normal to kill babies in the womb if you don't want them.

It is now normal to neglect your children for your own personal desires.

And those these sins have been around sin entered the world, we are in the midst of a what I call a moral revolution.

And in all honesty, we could talk about the problems with the family week after week.

Divorce, abuse, homosexual marriage, no marriage, abortion, unfaithfulness, neglect....

The list is endless when it comes to problems in society related to the family.

And unfortunately, that is as far as we get in addressing issues in the family in most cases.

We talk about it...

Or rather we complain about it in our own family.

But mostly we complain about other families and their problems...

WE think they contribute to the problem.

So, we moan and complain, but we never do anything about it.

Or worse yet, we contribute to the problems in the world by our own actions.

The Scriptures haven't called us to complain about how the family is falling apart...

Instead, God calls us to obedience in our own situation first and then to share these truths with others.

But here is the problem....

Where do we start?

If you just walk into any bookstore and look at the family section of books...

You will go insane trying to determine what is helpful or even true.

I searched Amazon books by typing in "better family" and it replied with over 65,000 books to choose from...

Even if you narrow your search down to a Christian bookstore, which is a step in the right direction, you will still be overwhelmed with possibilities.

I just simply searched the words "marriage and family" on one Christian book website and I got 7,522 possible books about that topic.

Listen to some of the titles I found...

96 Tips for Turning a Healthy Relationship into the Perfect Relationship

97 steps to a Healthy Relationship

102 Honest Answers to Questions Every Husband Wants to Ask and Every Woman Needs to Know

Save your Relationship: 21 Laws of Successful Relationships

Advice for a Healthy Relationship from MRrs. Dietz 3rd Grade Class

150 ways to Keep Your Love Alive and Stay Together for Good

12 ½ Strategies for a Happy Marriage

And the list goes on and on and on...

So, where do you start?

Simply put, you start with the One who created man, woman, marriage, family and children.

You start with God's Word on these issues.

And that is simply what we plan to do for the next few weeks.

We are going to look at what the Bible has to say about family, marriage, husbands, fathers, children, and parenting.

And what we will see beginning tonight is that God's Word offers very simple instruction on how to have and maintain a Christ-exalting family.

What you will hear over the next few weeks is not simply a pastoral opinion on the family.

It will not be my tips for raising a family.

It will not be what has worked for me.

You have enough "advice" on the family that you could spend the rest of your life hearing from man.

But what you need to do is to hear from the Lord first.

Isn't it very interesting that we are surrounded today with more resources than ever before on the family...

Yet the family is falling apart faster than ever before.

For 100s of years, godly families were the product of simply reading the Scriptures.

And it is time for the church to return to the Word of God and see what it teaches us about the family.

Also, this series on family is not meant to be a guilt trip series of sermons.

Everyone one of us will fall under conviction at some point tonight or in the weeks ahead.

And the point of that is not to fill your heart with regret or guilt.

The point is to expose you to God's Word on the family and bring you to repentance and obedience.

Some things we will talk about will be things that may be true about you or your family and it is simply water under the bridge.

You can't go back and redo a thing.

But other things will offer an opportunity for immediate obedience on your part.

Some things will be a starting point for teaching others about the family.

And if you are not in a position to go back, go forward by telling others the truth about family from the Word of God.

And my prayer is that the Lord will give you the grace to obey where you can and to obey right away.

And that he will also equip you to share these truths with others.

So, let's begin and I want to first establish our home base for all we will do over the next few weeks...

And our home base will be the book of Ephesians in the New Testament.

We will take strolls away from this text at times but this will be the blueprints for our building over the next month or so.

We will take the family as it comes to us in the book of Ephesians beginning in 5:18-6:4.

We will take these verses in order over the next few weeks and address issues in the family based upon this text...

Which addresses the family in this order...

The principle of family relationships.

The role of wives.

The role of husbands.

The role of children.

And the role of parents.

My aim is not to complicate this for you, because God did not complicate it when He wrote it.

Before we look at Ephesians 5, let's turn back to the very first chapter in the Bible..

Genesis 1...

Most of you know the creation account.

God made the world in 6 days and He rested on the 7th day...

But I want you to notice what God did all throughout his creation of the earth....

He was constantly declaring it good....

Let your eyes scan these verses.... Gen 1:4...

“God saw that the light was good”

Gen 1:10...”And God saw that it was good”

Gen 1:12... “And God saw that it was good”

Gen 1:18.... “ And God saw that it was good”

And it continued with each creative act until we get to Gen 1:31...

“God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good”

And then when you go to Genesis 2, which simply is a more detailed account of God's creation of man...

You arrive at Genesis 2:18....

Which stands out like a sore thumb....

Because it reveals something that is not good....

“It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him.”

And with the creation of Eve out of the side of Adam, you have the first family.

And you also have the institution of marriage established right there in Gen. 2:24...

“²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

And there you have it, God made man and woman and he designed marriage and the idea of family.

Marriage is not the idea of man,; it is the mercy of a loving God who sees the importance of companionship in the world.

And isn't it interesting that every thriving society in human history has embraced the idea of marriage.

This is not a solely a Christian institution.

Marriage has been honored in all areas of the world, regardless of religion.

And I say thriving communities because the evidence is also clear...

When the family fails, the societies crumble.

That is because family is the building block for nations and people.

Families are the Lego pieces that hold countries together.

Where di Satan first attack?

He attacked the family in the garden of Eden.

He separated Eve from her husband and eventually led both of them to sin.

He then tempted one brother to murder the other brother.

Satan first attacked Job's family when he was trying to attack Job.

David committed was not faithful to his wife and that led to huge problems in his family...

With his own son eventually wanting to murder his dad.

The family is always under attack.

Our families are a target for the devil and he often hits the bullseye.

But what I want you to see is that marriage and family and parenting have been around since the very beginning.

Adam and Eve were married and had children.

This is the pattern since the very beginning and it continues until today not by accident....

But because it was God's design from the very beginning.

That is why is it the ultimate form of arrogance to start refining the family.

In March of this year, married celebrities Chris Martin and Gwyneth Paltrow released this statement...

"It is with hearts full of sadness that we have decided to separate," the statement said. "We have been working hard for well over a year, some of it together, some of it separated, to see what might have been possible between us, and we have come to the conclusion that while we

love each other very much we will remain separate."

The couple said that they would continue to work together to raise daughter Apple, 9, and son Moses, 7.

"We are, however, and always will be a family, and in many ways we are closer than we have ever been," the statement said. "We are parents first and foremost, to two incredibly wonderful children and we ask for their and our space and privacy to be respected at this difficult time. We have always conducted our relationship privately, and we hope that as we consciously uncouple and coparent, we will be able to continue in the same manner."

She just said that they will separate but still be a family, and then said we are closer than ever before.

That is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard.

You now separate to get closer, and you still remain a family.

But that is just the tip of the iceberg on how family is being redefined in our world.

While I was working on this sermon and watching 19 Kids and Counting with the girls...

I saw an advertisement for a show on TLC entitled "My Five Wives."

Which is additional proof that people are changing what family means every day.

Some women's groups even see family as evil.

Saying that family is legalized servitude for women and that family relationships are the source of all the world's oppression.

And as outrageous as that seems, most people have no problem with the redefinition of family

3 years ago, only 33% of people thought that changing the idea of what family means was a bad idea.

But the truth is that it is not up to society to define what family or marriage is....

God has defined it.

And it is the height of arrogance, pride, and a great sin to say that we can just change his definition...

If it doesn't line up with what we think is right.

Family was established and defined in the very beginning....

By God Himself.

And we don't honor Him by changing what he said...

We honor Him by affirming what he said and learning to how to be a family that brings him glory.

So now that we have seen that God made the rules for family, marriage and having children,...

Let's find out how to have a family that best honors His design.

So turn back with me to Ephesians 5....

I want to read Ephesians 5:15-21....

This letter to the church at Ephesus is very similar to other books in the NT.

Often, God filled the first part of the book with truths about Him....

And then the latter part of the book would be ways that we should live in light of that truth.

This is like getting a driver's license...

You need to study the guidelines and truth about driving...

Then you get behind the wheel.

In the book of Ephesians, this is the get behind the wheel section.

The apostle Paul is giving us some very ways that Christians should live.

In fact, he is going to give very clear instructions to wives, husbands, children and parents.

But before he begins with these instructions to each group, he starts in verse 15 with some instructions that need to go to everyone in a family....

And really to every Christian..

But it is interesting that this is what he says right before he talks about family relationships.

Apparently, they are very important for all these individual members of a family.

So let's look at these verse as an introduction to our study on the family.

Verse 15...

¹⁵ Therefore ^[i]be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶[k]making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

It is very clear and will become more clear as we look at the family that the most important element of having a good family...

That you must first be saved.

Because you cannot walk as a wise man if you don't know the Lord.

You need the wisdom that only the Spirit of the Lord can give if you want to have a family that honors God.

And then Paul continues in verse 17.....

17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Here is where so many people get confused...

People will often say how do I know God's will for me?

Well, that is simple.

Read and obey his word.

Paul is preparing to get ready to reveal God's will for your family.

He didn't leave it up to you to try and determine God's will for your family on your own.

It does not require you to connect to this other level where we mystically find God's will.

The mercy of God is that he reveals his will through His word.

And Paul is saying here is the will of God for your family.

Get ready. Wise up. Here is how family should be done.

So, I would say the first rule of family relationships is to BE WISE.

Secondly, the next rule for family relationships is to BE FILLED.

Verse 18,

⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, ^[U]for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

This is where you need to know a little bit about Paul's audience for this letter.

Paul is writing to believers in a city that thought the way to God was through artificial means.

Worshippers of false religions in Ephesus thought that you made contact with God when you were high on wine.

That was a part of their false worship.

But Paul is saying,...

Christians do not learn and communicate with God by altering their mind....

Instead they let their minds be altered by God.

However, many in the church have misunderstood this verse to think that being filled with the Spirit is some crazy experience.

Where you leave your mind and go to a higher place in the Spirit where you experience more of God.

I would say that is closer to what the Ephesians were doing with their wine...

Than what Paul is trying to say here.

Being filled with the Spirit is simply being filled with God's Word of whom the Spirit is the author.

Being filled with the Spirit is simply reading and obeying God's Word.

Let me share a truth with you church.

When someone is saved, they are both baptized and filled with the Spirit to the same level.

The only difference in believers is how much you are controlled by the Spirit and live by the Spirit...

Which depends upon a believer's obedience to God's Word.

You are full of the Spirit if you are a believer.

But you may not be walking by the Spirit.

How do you walk in the Spirit?

In Colossians, Paul also gives very similar instructions about the family...

And before he talks offers specific instructions, he says this...

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (Col 3:16)

That is what it means to be filled with the Spirit; it simply means reading and living in obedience to the Word of God.

Being filled with the Spirit is not losing control or going out of yourself or fainting.

Being filled with the Spirit is simply being under the control of the Spirit by living in obedience to the Scriptures.

And that is a necessary part of family relationships....

You need to make sure you are first obeying God and living according to His Word on a daily basis.

Do not point a finger at your spouse or kids before you first examine your own life.

BE WISE, BE FILLED, third...

BE WORSHIPPING...

The natural reaction of a life that is spirit filled and lived in obedience is that you are a person who is always worshipping the Lord.

Verse 19...

¹⁹ speaking to ^[m]one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

As Sherlock Holmes, this is elementary my dear Watson.

IF you find a person who is walking in obedience to God...

Consistently reading and obeying his word...

You will find a heart that is always worshipping the Lord.

You will hear them singing to the Lord.

You will see a smile on their face and in their heart.

You will find a person who can truly get along with anybody.

That is as simple as it gets when it comes to family relationships.

Worshipful and pleasant people make great family members.

And it is not a fake happiness, a fake smile, a fake gentleness.

It is a genuine joy in the hearts because they are obedient people.

As corny as it sounds, people who are happy in the Lord are happy in their family.

SO BE WORSHIPFUL.

Next, look at verse 20....

²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to ^[n]God, even the Father

The next action of a good family member is to

BE THANKFUL.

This is where successful family relationships thrive regardless of the circumstances...

When family members are thankful, there is harmony among them.

A discontented heart will result in a discontented family member.

You cannot hardly even argue with someone who is always thankful.

It is almost maddening to deal with people who rarely get upset because they are so content with life.

That's why strategies and plans to be a better husband or father or wife or mother are not always the answer to the problems in a family or marriage.

IT is never a bad idea to date your wife or to spend quality time with your kids...

But in the end even these dates and events end, and if your spouse or kids cannot find thankfulness every day in the little events of life...

The big events will have to come more frequently to keep everyone happy.

You want to be a better family member, be thankful to the Lord everyday for the grace that he extends to you.

So far, we have seen the need to

BE WISE, BE FILLED, BE WORSHIPFUL, BE
THANKFUL....

And if you succeed in those four, the last one will
come natural...

And in it is the real secret to having a great family
and even better relationships within that family...

Number 5, BE SUBMISSIVE.

Verse 21...

*²¹ [a] **and be subject to one another in the [b] fear of
Christ.***

So many people start out with this command 9
times out of 10, it is directed to the wife,...

That is so unfortunate.

Paul is going to address every family member
beginning next week...

But right now, he is talking to every Christian and
every person in the family...

And he says, be subject to one another.

This means husbands be subject to wives, wives to
husbands, children to parents and parents to kids..

Now, this doesn't mean that no one is the leader of the family.

The Bible certainly teaches otherwise, but it is saying that every family member lives a life of submission to one another.

The secret to families is not spending 2 vacations with your kids,

The secret is not developing this long set of family rules and goals that everyone follows...

The secret is not purchasing the perfect gift for your wife...

The secret is not even being faithful to taking your kids to church every week.

The secret of successful families is that every member lives a life in subjection to one another.

Which simply means that you lay aside your needs for the needs of others.

The instruction to having a family that honors the Lord is a spiritual issue.

It is not a financial issue. You don't need a lot of money.

It is not even a time issue.

The key to having a family that honors the Lord is submitting yourself everyday to the others members of your family.

Family are not a race to see how you can benefit.

Families are a race to looking out for the needs of the other members of the family.

Jesus was headed to the cross.

A definite trial in his life.

Yet, when he gathered with the disciples before his crucifixion, the topic was not to discuss how bad he had it.

Instead, what did Jesus do?

He washed their feet.

Jesus was always concerned with the needs of others above Himself.

And if you dissect the very best family you know, at the very center of that, you will find that the members of the family are characterized by submission to one another.

That is the building block of a successful family.

That is why Paul started here before he addressed every individual member of the family.

You got to get this right before anything else.

You Must be WISE and listen to the Lord's counsel on the family.

You must be FILLED with the Spirit by reading and obeying God's Word.

You must be WORSHIPFUL, which is a result of being spirit filled.

You must be THANKFUL, finding your contentment in the Lord.

And when all of these combine, you will be SUBMISSIVE to the other members of your family.

The problem is that pastors tell you to submit before they tell you how to submit.

Submission is the natural outflow of a life that is constantly in God's Word...

Constantly offering praise to the Lord,..

Constantly offering thanks to God...

IT is when we try to submit before doing all those other things that we find it extremely difficult.

My prayer for you is that you would meditate on these verses this week in your own heart...

Before you demand the other members of your family to obey them.

Next week, we will look at what Paul offers to wives..

And before you think that Paul addressed them first for some reason.

Consider this, he will only offer 3 verse to them, while the Lord uses him to write 8 verse to husbands.