

What Is Family For?

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[0 : 0 0] A child once asked his father, Dad, where do people come from? So his father said, well, son, Adam and Eve made babies, and their babies became adults,¹ and made babies and so on and so forth until we have all the people we have.

That's why we have people. Anyway, the child went to his mother then and asked the same question. And she told him, well, you see, son, we were all monkeys.

And then we evolved to become like we are now. That's where people come from. So the child ran back to his father and said, Dad, you lied to me.

His father replied, no, son, your mom was just talking about her side of the family. Well, I don't know where you think your family came from.

Maybe you think that it was just random evolution that brought you here. Many people do. And put you in the family that you're in. But when we open the Bible, we see a very different explanation for why you're in the family you're in.

[1 : 1 8] And why we're here in the first place. And in the Bible, we discover that not only was each of us designed by an intelligent designer for a purpose, but that each of our families was too.

That just as God designed our bodies to work and function in the way they do, God actually designed each of our families to work and function in a particular way, to fulfill a particular purpose in his world, in his created order.

And today we're going to look at what that purpose is. Why did God make families and design them the way he did? And then from next week, as we continue the series, we're going to be looking at the role each of us is called to play in the families in which God has put us.

And this series we're doing at the start of this term is something that I think is very needed in our world today.

The series about looking at what the Bible says about families. Not just because, you know, the society's view of family is very different to the Bible's view, but because also in today's world of how we find the Bible's view of family increasingly under attack in our world and in our society.

[2 : 4 5] That's the first thing I want us to think about is how family is actually under attack in the world we live in. From popular TV shows that mock traditional family values and glorify things like premarital sex and hookup culture and easy divorce, which are actually very damaging to families, and yet they're seen as light and enjoyable things on TV and film, to movements such as, I don't know if you remember the Black Lives Matter movement, which was, and it's still very active.

Now that's a movement that seems to be for good purposes, for racial equality, which is a very good thing. And yet they have movements like that, which are Marxist movements by nature, actually have a lot of other goals, and they have explicitly stated, for example, on their website, that their goal is to, I quote, dismantle patriarchy and disrupt the nuclear family structure.

They are waging a war against family. And that is actually a key agenda of what we call social Marxism, which is a movement in our world today, and it's been around for centuries, which is basically to make the state the parent of children, not nuclear families.

And, of course, governments love that idea, and they get on board with that, and they pass legislation to that effect, like our own government is doing, desiring ever more control over families and passing more and more policies and legislation, for example, to limit parents' say in how to raise and educate their children.

We're seeing that in our country at the moment. And so there's no doubt that families are under attack in our society from various aspects, from media, from private organizations, from governments.

[4 : 44] And as we look at this, we've got to ask the question, but why? What's so bad about the nuclear family structure, the traditional family that people are so opposed to?

Why is it so under attack, and why has it been for so long? Well, the Bible actually answers that question. It tells us where this hostility comes from towards the traditional family structure.

And what we learn is that it's actually part of a deeper spiritual conflict that's going on in our world, and has been from the beginning. We know, the Bible tells us, that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but it's against the spiritual forces in the heavenly realms.

There are intelligent spiritual forces that are carrying out agendas, and that's coming through in government policies, and it's coming through in film and media. And the people involved don't even know what is inspiring this opposition, but that's the source of it.

It's actually a spiritual battle. And while it's taken on new forms in our age today, this attack on the family is actually nothing new.

[5 : 59] We see it, in fact, in the very first pages of the Bible. As Adrian was reading to us from Genesis 3, we actually saw the first war being waged against family.

So, in Genesis, no sooner has God created the world and humanity than Satan launches an attack to disrupt God's good plan.

Okay, so we know the story, right? We know the reason that humanity fell into sin, Satan's tempting of Eve.

But the way he did it, if you read it closely, you realize he was actually attacking the family structure, the very first family. He undermines the relationship between Adam and Eve.

That's the first way he does it, to bring distrust, to bring blaming each other. And then what he does, after undermining the relationship between Adam and Eve, we see in the next chapter, in Genesis 4, in the next generation, he immediately puts enmity between the first two brothers, Cain and Abel, which leads to murder.

[7 : 23] And so you see, right from the beginning, as we read the very first pages of Scripture, we realize that family relationships, the marriage, sibling relationships, the relationships which bonded families together was Satan's first target.

And those relationships are still Satan's first target today. And so, why is that? Why are evil forces so obsessed with attacking families?

And it's a good question to ask, because if that's true, then our families, whatever they are, your family, my family, they're actually in Satan's crosshair.

He is spending and focusing his resources on making sure that families don't work properly. And so we've got to ask, why? Why is he so obsessed with attacking family relationships?

Well, to find that out, we need to go a couple of chapters back in our Bible, to see why God established families in the first place. And so that's what we're going to look at, families in God's plan.

[8 : 36] And when God first created humans, you'll know if you've read Genesis, he told us why. He told us the reason he made men and women.

And we find that in Genesis 1 from verse 26. Let me read that. Then God said, let us make man, or mankind, in our image, according to our likeness.

They will rule the fish of the sea, and the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth. So God created man in his own image.

He created him in the image of God. He created them, male and female. Okay, so here we see a description of why God created us in the first place.

And that is, the reason he made us, was to image him. To image him. To display, in the created order, to display who God is, to the rest of creation, and to manage and care for the rest of creation, on God's behalf.

[9 : 43] So God basically put humans in between heaven and earth, in between him, and the rest of the created order, for us to represent, and to image him to the world.

That is our purpose. That is why we're here. But as we read on, we see, and it's really interesting, that Adam, the first man God made, wasn't able to image God, by himself.

We see this in the next chapter, verse 18 of chapter 2. God says, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper, corresponding to him.

And God said, it's not good for him to be alone. He's saying, it's not fitting. It's not right for him to be alone. He won't be able to, fulfill his purpose, being alone.

And so he made Eve, his wife, as the perfect complement. Female, as the perfect partner, perfect complement for male. To be able to do things, that each other can't do by themselves.

[10 : 48] And only together, this is important, only together, were they able to fully image God, in the world. Not alone, not by themselves, but together, in this relationship together, could they image God.

And then only by having children, could they then carry out, the mission God has given them, to care for the rest of the world, to expand, to populate the earth.

In other words, as we read the creation account, what we discover, is that only when humans formed a family, could they fulfill the task, that God gave them to do.

Do you see how important, family was, in God's original plan? Family was actually, essential, being a family, humans being in a family, was essential, to image God, fully.

And that makes sense, when we think about it, and consider that God himself, is a family. Have you ever considered that? God is a family, in his very nature, of who he is.

[11 : 57] The Bible reveals, that God is not, a lone individual, but he is a set of relationships. That is one of the things, that is mind blowing, about what the Bible reveals, about God.

God is a trinity, he is a community, in and of himself. God has never been alone, he has never been an individual, alone. And that's why, when he made humans, it was not good for humans, to be alone, because to image, God we need to be together, and God himself, is not just a set of relationships, but a set of family relationships, with a father and a son.

And that is the very essence, of God's nature. In eternity past, that's who God has been, he's been a family. Family, actually defines, the character, and the nature of God.

And so when he, devised and created family, it was to image, him, it was to image, what he is like. And so the only way, we can properly image God, is through families.

In fact, God's very core attributes, if you think about it, which he wants us to, display an image, things like, unconditional love, and grace, and forgiveness, as well as, things like order, and justice.

[13 : 21] These are things, that we first experience, and learn to do, in the context of, a family, right? As we grow up. It's, it's where we first experience, a bit of what it's like, for God to love us, through, how our parents love us.

It's where we first experience, the need to forgive, wrongs of each other, as our siblings, wrong, you know, do wrongs against us, and we have to be gracious, and forgive them.

So the attributes of God, that he wants us to image, in the world, are things that we first learn, to do, in our families. That also explains, why, for any functioning society, we need healthy families, in the world.

Because if we learn, to do the things, that God wants us to do, in families, we need functioning families, to begin with, so that society can work. And in fact, numerous studies, have shown, that, the more, you have, nuclear families, actually together, and working, in any given society, the healthier, that society is.

And the less crime, there is, and the less, drug abuse, there is, and the less poverty, there is. You can draw, a direct correlation, between, the health, of the nuclear family, and the health, of society at large.

[14 : 40] In fact, I used to, do some ministry, at Polsmo prison. And one of the things, that struck me, about what I'd learned, about the people, who were in prison, was that a majority, something like, 80 to 90 percent, of the, of the inmates, when they, when surveys were done, and studies were done, majority of those criminals, who were in prison, had no, no present father figure, growing up.

They, they came from, families that weren't, working properly. and that's what led, to them, doing what they did, and, and leading a life, of crime. Because God, designed family, to be the basic, cell, of any society, that makes the rest, of society, healthy.

It works, it starts, on a cellular level. You know, like our bodies, our bodies are made up, of tiny cells, and those, little cells, need to be working, properly, for our whole, body to work.

It's the same, with any society, or any community, the cells that make it up. Families, in the home, need to be working, properly for the community, to work. And if the cell, is cancerous, like in our bodies, if the cells get cancer, the whole body, ends up dying.

Well it's the same, in society, with families. And that, that is why, Satan attacks, families. That is why, he's targeting, families.

[16 : 08] Satan, he's wily, he's clever, and he works, on a cellular level, in societies. Sometimes, he'll, he'll do big, large scale, kind of attacks, and governments, and wars, and conflicts, but the day to day, attacks, on God's world, that Satan carries out, is in your family, and my family.

That's where he's targeting. He works on a, cellular, cellular level, to upset, God's plans, for this world, and for society. And sadly, when we look around, in our world, we see that he has succeeded, hasn't he?

He has succeeded. Just as sin, has broken our relationship, with God, it also messes up, our relationships, in our families.

It messes up, our relationships, with each other. And, it therefore, prevents, families, being what God, designed them to be, in creation.

And that is the state, that we're in today, in this fallen world. Families actually just, don't function, like they're meant to, and it's always our sin, that gets in the way, of them, being able to image God.

[17 : 21] That doesn't mean, that they never work. Of course, you do have, working families, you do have, good in families, moments of them, imaging, God's love, and forgiveness, and it's beautiful, when we see it.

You know, when you see, the unconditional love, that a parent has, for a child. When you see, a sibling, learning to forgive, their sibling, who's wronged them.

When you see, families, enjoying, those happy times, on holidays, when they're all together, and enjoying, each other's company. It's there, in our families, when those things happen, when families work, that we see flashes, of God's goodness, and character, coming out.

But we also know, that that's not always, like that, is it? And sadly, in most families, in the world, that is far from the norm. Because all families, also have their drama.

Don't we know it? And their arguments, sometimes heated, and ugly arguments. And sometimes, the most, painful, and destructive, conflicts, happen within families.

[18 : 37] And relationships, growing cold. And over the years, family members, distancing themselves, drifting apart, avoiding each other.

And we've all experienced, that to some degree, or another. more often than not, families fail to be, the images of God, that they were designed to be, in this world.

And they just become, you know, for most people, places to grow up, get food and shelter, until such time, as you can escape, and get out, and live your own life, and just make sure, you call mom, every now and again.

That's essentially, how most families, are seen today. We've lost sight, largely, of the place, of families, in God's plan. And what we're meant, to do with our families.

But that's also why, as we continue, to read scripture, we realize, and this is something, that we need to notice, about God's plan, to fix this world.

[19 : 49] You know, when we read the Bible, and we look at God's plan, to fix this world, we see it's about, him fixing us, as well as individuals, but what we sometimes, fail to see, is that it's also about, him fixing families.

God's plan, to fix this world, actually begins, by fixing families, and getting, getting us back on track, with his plan, for families.

He hasn't abandoned, his plan, for families, to image him. And so, part of his plan, to save us, is to, to start with families. Do you know, what the last verse, in the Old Testament is?

It's in the book of Malachi, which is the last book, in the Old Testament. And the book of Malachi, is looking forward, to God's plan, to restore, this broken world, in preparation, for the revelation, of Jesus, and the New Testament, and God's plan, of salvation.

But, what's really interesting, is the very last verse, of Malachi, the very last verse, of our Old Testament, is about, how God is going to start, that restoration process, by fixing, families.

[21 : 07] Let me read it to you. Malachi 4, verse 6, says, and he will, turn the hearts, of fathers, to their children, and the hearts, of children, to their fathers.

Or, another translation, says, he will teach parents, how to love their children, properly, and he will teach children, how to honor their parents. That's the, that's the last verse, of the Old Testament.

That's the, the hope, of what God is going to bring, to this world. God's plan, to fix, this world, you see, involves, not just, restoring, individuals, but restoring, families.

And the reason, is because, God, sees families, as very important. They're central, in his plan. Just as they were central, in his plan, creating this world, they are central, in his plan, to restore it, and redeem it, and rescue it.

Just as families, were key, to creating humanity, families, are going to be the key, to creating, the new humanity, Jesus came to start. Because, if you didn't know it, that is what God's plan, for this world, is.

[22 : 23] it's to create, a new, type of human. To create, a new, redeemed humanity, out of this, old, broken one.

And that's, God's amazing plan. Instead of, you see, when we sinned, when we fell, into sin, instead of, wiping us all out, which God had every right, to do, by the way, and starting over, he had a much, greater plan, but it was a plan, that would require, much more difficulty, from God himself.

And, and coming in, and redeeming us, and, instead of wiping us all out, to create a new humanity, from within the old, broken, humanity. Humans who, who, live the way, God intended, and image him, once again.

And that is what, Jesus came to make possible, when he died, for our sins, that we just remembered, at Easter. To break, sin's power, over us. That's what his death, achieves, for those who trust in him.

The breaking, of sin's power, so that we can live, new lives. But then also, he rose again, which we remembered, on Easter Sunday, to give us, this new, resurrection power, to live these, new resurrected lives, even now, in this, fallen world, to be, as he puts it, to be born again.

[23 : 48] And anyone, who trusts, in Christ, and comes under his rule, can receive this new life, this power, to be, this new type of human, that God is creating, in this world.

That is, the gospel, that is, God's plan of salvation. And, as we read, the New Testament, it instructs us, how to live this new life, because we're not going, to do it automatically, because we're still, we've still got sin in us, and so, we need help, to know how to live, this new life.

God gives us the power, in his spirit, to do that, but we need to be, instructed on to how, so that's how, that's what the New Testament, is for. It instructs us, how to live this new life, but also, what's interesting, is the New Testament, has such a lot, to say about families, and how to live, in families, because it turns out, that our families, are going to play, a key role, in learning to live, as these new humans, that Jesus, came to save us, to be, and we see this, in Paul's letters, if you read, the letters of the Apostle Paul, these are letters, that instruct, different groups, of Christians, how to, live this new life, that they're called, to live, and so, I'll just take you, to some Colossians, three, Paul says, you have been, now, raised with Christ, that's how he, describes Christians, even in this world, even before our, actual physical resurrection, one day, after we die, in the new creation, he's saying, right now, you have been, it's past tense, you have been raised, with Christ, you already received, this resurrection power, to live a new life, and so he goes on, in Colossians 3, 12 to 14, he says, therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, these are all, attributes of this new life, this new humanity, right, he says, bearing with one another, and forgiving, one another, if anyone has a grievance, against one another, just as the Lord, has forgiven you, so, you are to forgive, each other, above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond, of unity, so here's a portrait, here's instructions, on how to start, practicing, and living this new life, with things like, bearing with each other, and kindness, and gentleness, and patience, now, where do you think, we learn how to do, these things first, well, in families, right, that's where we start, to practice, these, these, new humanity, ways of living,

I mean, if you can't do, these things, in your family, you certainly can't, do them anywhere else, family is the first, kind of, place, context, that we learn, to live, as these new humans, Jesus has saved us, to be, and that is why, the very next thing, Paul talks about, in Colossians, after what I've just read, is he talks about, how to live in families, properly, the God's order, for families, wives, and husbands, and children, and what they're to do, how to build, healthy families, the same pattern, we see in his other epistles, like Ephesians, so, Ephesians chapter 2, starts, we heard it earlier, you were dead, in your trespasses, and sins, in which you previously lived, according to the ways, of this world, according to the ruler, of the power, of the air, the spirit, now working, in the disobedient, but then he goes on, in verse 4, and says, but God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love, that he had for us, made us alive, with Christ, even though we were dead, in trespasses, you are saved, by grace, he also raised us, up with him, and seated us, with him in the heavens, in Christ Jesus, so, he's saying, you're living a new life now, if you're a Christian, if you're truly a believer, in Christ, and you've come under his rule, and you've trusted him, you've been raised, to live a completely new life, to your old life, and a completely new life, to the rest, of the world, but then he goes on, in chapter 4, and says, therefore, because of this,

I urge you, to live worthy, of the calling, you have received, we have to, actually make an effort, to live this new life, it doesn't come automatically, he says, with all humility, and, gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another, in love, making every effort, to keep the unity, of the spirit, through the bond of peace, okay, so he's saying, right, you see the pattern, you've been raised with Christ, you've been empowered, to live a new life, therefore, you need to make an effort, and put into practice, practice living this new life, but then what Paul does, in Ephesians, is he spends the next, three chapters, in the book, describing in detail, how to live this new life, and right smack bang, in the middle of those, three chapters, is an extended, description of how to live, in a family, properly, Ephesians 5 and 6, he says, wives submit to your husbands, husbands love your wives, children obey your parents, and he goes into detail, about each member, of the family, and how they're to live, as new humanity, in the context, of family, it's a central focus, in the New Testament letters, that teach us, how to live, this new life, is how we live in families, because, living, the new life,

[29 : 43] Jesus came to give us, starts, in our families, they are essentially, to be the incubators, for new life, to form in this world, that is what God, has designed the Christian family, now to be, these little incubators, that he's scattered, all around the world, that are going to be, where new life grows out of, that's going to affect, and spread, around the world, where, the ways, and the principles, of living this new life, in Christ, are learned, and practiced, that's God's plan, for the Christian family, and those are things, we can't actually do, at church on Sunday, now of course, church is essential, and we learn, these truths, we learn about, this new life, we learn about, the gospel, when we, when we come to church, and listen to God's word, but, but where we see it, in action, where we actually, see it lived out, where we see, what it looks like, to live a gospel life, with all the challenges, of life, that is, we see that, in the family, what the gospel, means to relationships, what the gospel, means to how we, live together, how we forgive each other, it's where, where children, see the example, of Christian parents, centralizing, living for Christ, in the home, we see, these things, in family, family is where, we see, this new life, lived out, and that is why, the Christian family, is a key weapon, that Jesus is using, to overcome evil forces, in this world, just as evil forces, knew, that attacking the family, is the way, to attack society, so Jesus knows, that to attack evil, is through redeemed, and restored families, and that is what, he's focusing on, that is his key, strategy, his key weapon, they are the new cells, that will defeat, the cancer, father, but to be that, for our families, to be that, for your family, to be that, we need to learn, to make our families, what God designed them to be, and that, doesn't happen automatically, and I'm seeking, especially to fathers, amongst you, because you are the leaders, of your families, and we're going to see that, as we, as we continue this series, but it's your responsibility, to make sure, your family becomes, this new, gospel, living cell, that's going to, be used by Christ, to overcome evil, in the world, to learn, to make our families, what God designed them, to be, and for each of us, to play our roles, that God calls us to play, because that's also important, that, not only do, do fathers lead their families, to become what God, wants them to be, but that each of us, no matter who we are, in the family, husband, wife, child, sibling, whatever, we know what our role is, that the Bible gives us, and the Bible gives us, roles, the Bible describes, how to be, good siblings, sons, daughters, wives, parents, fathers, husbands, and that's what the rest, of the series is going to go into, in the next few weeks, so come back, as we go into each of those roles, in detail, we take a Sunday, for each one, but in the meantime, as we end off today,

I think the challenge, today is to, to just learn, to see our families, in a new light, learn to see your family, no matter what it is, no matter what family, God has placed you in, learn to see it, in a new light, whether it's, a Christian family, or not a Christian family, you know, whether, however far from, ideal, your family is, realize that, God has put you, in it, for a reason, to be the training ground, for you, to image him, to image his forgiveness, and his love, and his patience, it's the, it's the training center, for you to practice, these things, this new way of living, that God has saved us for, now, you might be sitting here, and saying, well, I don't have a family, most people will have some, biological family around, but maybe you don't, maybe you've lost your family, well, that's also why,

God has given us, the church, to be the ultimate family, the eternal family, where we also practice, these things, with each other, and so, if you don't have, other family, spend even more time, with your church family, because that ultimately, is, is the family, that God has saved you, to be in, but if you also, do have an earthly family, too, realize, that it's more valuable, than you think, it's not, it's not random, that you're in that family, and learn to value it, for what it is, for what God has, put you in that family for, for what God has put that family, in your life for, learn to value it, learn to cherish it, and most importantly, in the next few weeks, learn, how to play the role, that God has put you, in that family, to play, for his glory, let's pray that we will, will you bow with me,

Lord you are, the ultimate family, you, are God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and you made us, to be families, to image you, but Lord we confess, how much we fail, to do that, because of our sin, families today, aren't what you, intend them to be, but thank you for Jesus, thank you for the gospel, thank you Lord Jesus, for your death, and your resurrection, which transforms us, which breaks the power, of sin, which gives us, power to live, a new life, so that, our families, can come back, to your plan for them, help us Lord, to do that, help us to, to make our families, what you saved us, to be, and, help us each, to learn how to, play the roles, that you specify, in your word, for us to play, help us to, pay attention, to what you say, and to what those roles are, and give us the power, to live these new lives, to image you, in the world, and for your kingdom, to grow, and for your will, to be done, we pray in Jesus name,

Amen.