

The Family As God Created It As Sin Made it

What Is A Family?

In Genesis 2:18, “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper for him.’” Even though Adam was living in a sin-free environment and had unbroken fellowship with his Creator, God recognized that Adam needed a marriage partner and human companionship. From this passage in the Bible we see that each one of us was created with a need for intimate human relationships. Our family is the first place where we experience such relationships.

Family is God’s idea and not man’s. God formed the first family when He created Adam and Eve and initiated the first marriage. Ever since the creation of Adam and Eve, families have played a key role in forming our values and our outlook on life. We develop our sense of identity from our family, and life’s most basic questions are answered in our family. Questions such as, Who am I? Where did I come from? What am I doing here? Our family is also the place where we first experience loving relationships, and it is the place where we learn to express love to others.

The family is the cornerstone of a society. Healthy families produce healthy societies. Weak families produce weak societies. Families form our values, teach us language, and help us define the various roles men and women have in a society. We learn from our families what it means to be a father, husband, wife, mother, son, daughter, brother and sister. The family prepares us to be a functioning member in the greater society around us. Thus, when family life breaks down in a culture, the entire culture is weakened.

Families also play a critical role in the life of the church. Strong families produce strong churches. Weak families produce weak churches. The family is a place for leadership development, as I Timothy 3:5 tells us, “If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?” Good leadership begins in the home. If we can’t lead our own children and care for our spouses, we have little hope of being a successful leader in the church.

The husband/wife relationship is portrayed in Ephesians chapter 5 as a picture of Christ’s relationship with the Church. A husband’s love for his wife is to be an example of how Christ loves and cares for the church. A wife’s respect for her husband is to be an example of how the church respects and responds to the Lord. So, as we can see, marriage and family play a key role in God’s plan for the church and for the nations of the world.

This book is designed to look at family and marriage from God’s perspective. My purpose is to enable you to understand God’s intentions for the family and to discover the biblical principles of marriage and family life. I want you to understand some of the dynamics of a good marriage and a healthy family. My prayer is that your own marriage and family will be strengthened as you read this book, and that you will then be more equipped to strengthen and restore other families.

God's Design For Marriage And Family

What did God originally have in mind when He created the family? What should a Biblical family look like? How should a Christian husband treat his wife? How should Christian parents raise their children? Where do we look to find the answers to these questions, and to find the model for a godly family?

It doesn't require an in-depth study of the Bible to realize that family life, including our own, is being lived far below the standard that God originally established. In fact, since the fall of the human race as recorded in Genesis chapter 3, every family has been negatively impacted by the presence of sin. Some families have more obvious and severe problems, but even the healthiest family feels the influence of sin. The families of the great patriarchs in the Bible, such as, Abraham, Moses and David, felt this influence, as well.

All we have to do is look in our own communities to know that there is a clear lack of understanding regarding family. Common sense tells us that we should not beat our children when they are hungry and crying. Recently a couple was in a restaurant having something to eat. They were watching what appeared to be a grandmother who was caring for her infant granddaughter. This little girl was crying because she was hungry, but the grandmother was busy feeding herself and ignored the granddaughter. The more that the granddaughter cried, the more the grandmother slapped the child in the face. This is cruel and should not have any place in family life. However in some cultures this is a common occurrence and is considered normal and acceptable. The Bible says in Hosea 4:14 that "a people without understanding will come to ruin"!

God is calling us to raise up a standard for the family, to fight for the family and to restore the family to its biblical destiny. In order to fulfill this calling, however, we first need to have a clear understanding of what we are fighting for, and what the Biblical standard really is. Almost everyone agrees that the family is under attack these days and that families are breaking down at an alarming rate. There is a deep desire in the hearts of many people to restore broken families, but there is sometimes a lack of clarity as to what families should be restored to.

Some people want to restore the family back to the way it was in a previous historical period. They long for the "good old days" when family life was more stable and predictable. They think the answer lies in recapturing something that was lost from our past. God's model of family life, however, is not attached to a previous time in human history. His plan for the family is not restricted by time and is valid for all time, including the past, the present, and the future.

Neither is His plan for the family attached to a certain culture. His Kingdom rises above culture. So, when we talk of restoring the family, we are not seeking to elevate a particular cultural model. We do not want to create a Jewish model for the family, a Western model, an Eastern model, an African model, or an Asian model. Instead we are seeking to restore the model that is an expression of the Kingdom of God, which is relevant in any culture.

All of us tend to look at marriage and family from the perspective of our own cultures and our own families. Our greatest challenge is to break out of those perspectives and to look at family life from God's perspective. We must look past our prejudices and our cultural perspectives in order to discover His original intention and design for the family. Each of us is vulnerable to interpret Biblical teachings about marriage and family based on our own traditions and experiences. Traditions are good when they are Biblically-based, but when they are contrary to Biblical truth, they must be adjusted by the Word of God, or else they become bondages and create distorted understandings about marriage and family life.

The Model Of The Trinity

The Bible begins with the following statement in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created..." God must be the starting point for us as we seek to gain understanding about marriage and family life. God created the first family, and Adam and Eve were created to reflect the nature and character of God. Their relationship was to be an earthly demonstration of the heavenly relationships in the Trinity. Therefore, to understand God's original design for the family, we need to understand how the three persons in the Trinity relate to one another. Their relationship is the model for what God wants multiplied on the earth through human families. Let's look at some of the characteristics of the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Trinity Love

The love within the Trinity is obviously the most outstanding aspect of God's nature and character. In fact, the Bible says in I John 4:16 that "God is love". He is not just a loving person, HE IS LOVE! Love is His very nature and essence. Jesus testified that the Father had loved Him before the creation of the world, in John 17:24. He also wanted the world to know that He loved the Father (John 14:31).

The Bible says in John 15:9, that Jesus loved the disciples in the same way that the Father had loved Him. He then called the disciples to love one another in the same way that He had loved them (John 15:12). Jesus demonstrated this Trinity love by laying down His life for us on the Cross. (Romans 5:8)

A Biblically-based family must, therefore, have Trinity love at the center of its life together. As Jesus demonstrated with His life, God's love involves both sacrifice and servanthood. God designed families to be filled with Trinity love; the love that comes from God! When God's love is in our homes, the world will truly know that we are believers and followers of Jesus. (John 13:35) His love is central to our understanding of family life. Without it, we will never fulfill the Biblical mandate to be a godly family. This is the love that comes from heaven and is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5:5) It does not spring from the human heart or from human effort.

Is your family filled with this kind of love? Does your family need to be transformed by this kind of love? Have you seen the futility of living by your own strength and your own power? If so, will you take a moment to acknowledge your need and ask the Lord to fill you with His unconditional love? Will you ask him to empower you to fulfill your role as a loving husband or a respectful wife? He wants to pour out His Grace upon you so that your family can become

everything He designed it to be.

Trinity Unity

In John 10:30, Jesus stated that He and the Father were one. He also prayed in John 17:11 that his disciples would be one, even as He and the Father were one. Imagine homes filled with that kind of unity, the unity that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit enjoy! Wouldn't you love to live in that kind of a family? God's original intention was that each one of us would grow up in exactly such a family. The unity in the Trinity was to be reproduced and multiplied in every family on the earth. God's desire has not changed; it is still the same today. Jesus is still praying for his disciples. He is praying that Christian husbands and Christian wives will be one, even as He and the Father are one. He is praying that Christian parents and Christian children will be one, even as He and the Father are one.

Jesus came to break down barriers between family members and to reconcile them to one another. He also came to reconcile us to God. He came and preached peace to those who were near and to those who were far off. Through Him we can all have access, in one Spirit, to the Father. Families can be reconciled through the cross and hostilities can be removed. He, Himself, is our peace and in Him we can come into unity with each other and become fellow citizens of God's household. (Ephesians 2:13-22)

Respectful Submission And Willing Obedience

Within the Trinity, we see the qualities of respectful submission and willing obedience. In John 14:31, Jesus said that He did exactly what the Father commanded Him. In John 15:10, He further stated that He had obeyed all His Father's commands. In John 6:38, He said that He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him.

Respectful submission and willing obedience are essential components in the Father/Son relationship expressed in the Bible. If we wish to express God's heart for the family, we must rediscover how God intended these two key attitudes to be expressed. Submission within the Trinity is certainly not characterized by oppression or domination. Jesus found submission to the will of the Father to be liberating and joyful. His submission was willing and not degrading and demeaning.

Sin has distorted and corrupted these Biblical concepts, which has led to misuse of authority, and in some cases, control and abuse. Jesus called us to demonstrate servant leadership in our relationships and not to rule over one another. We are not to dominate one another in the way that rulers of the world dominate those under their leadership. He came to serve rather than to be served. He humbled himself rather than exalted himself. He wants us to demonstrate this same attitude and this same kind of leadership in our families.

Diverse And Complimentary Roles

Within the Trinity we see clearly defined roles for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These roles do not carry a message of lesser value or worth to any member of the Trinity. In other words, the Son is not less important than the Father, just because He has a different role from the Father. Neither is the Holy Spirit inferior because His role is different from the Father. All three members of the Trinity are co-equal, but they have clearly distinct functions. The Father is not

the Son and the Son is not the Holy Spirit. The same can be said for the members of our families! God has called men and women to different and distinct roles within the home. Our understandings of these roles have been affected by sin and we have interpreted them wrongly in some cases. But the fact remains that every family member does not carry the same responsibility within the home, yet each member is equally important and valuable.

Unity does not mean uniformity. Instead, the Bible presents a model of unity with diversity. There is One God, yet three persons. There is one body, but many members. The two shall become one. Two becoming one does not mean that a man and a woman lose their individual identities when they get married. They are not interchangeable parts, but rather complimentary pieces that blend together in a harmony and unity that comes from God. Much of their shared life can be lived out as though there were “neither male nor female.” (Galatians 3:28) However, the husband is not the wife and the wife is not the husband. There are some roles that are specifically related to the husband, while other roles are specifically related to the wife. It is important for each family member to discover what those roles are and to seek God’s grace to fulfill those roles.

There was a great entertainer who lived a few generations ago. He was asked to be part of a show for former soldiers. His schedule was very busy so he could only offer a few minutes. When the entertainer got on stage, something interesting happened. He continued to stay on the stage. He stayed fifteen, twenty and then thirty minutes. After he came off the stage someone asked him, "I thought you had to go after a few minutes...what happened? The entertainer said, "Let me show you the reason why I stayed." In the front row of the audience sat two men, each had lost an arm in the war. One had lost his right arm and the other had lost his left. Together they had two arms and two hands, and together they were able to clap. They clapped loudly and cheerfully. What a great example of two people complimenting one another!

The Gospel of John helps us to see how this unity and diversity is expressed through the Father/Son relationship. John gives us a glimpse into one of the most beautiful and intimate relationships in the Bible. Over and over again we see how God the Son related to God the Father. We can gain many insights about family life by reading and meditating on this important book. In fact, if you go through the Gospel of John and underline each time the word Father is used, you will find a wealth of insights on the Father/Son relationship. Chapters 12-17 are especially revealing and are worthy of extensive study and meditation.

Here are just a few examples highlighting the Father/Son relationship from these chapters. “For I do not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.” (John 12:49) “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God...” (John 13:3) “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.” (John 14:9-11) “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.” (John 15:9) “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” (John 17:20-21)

The Family As God Created It

In Matthew 19:4, Jesus was faced with the question of whether or not divorce should be allowed for any and every reason. In answering this question He did not respond by saying, “What is everyone doing?” Nor did He say, “What are the religious leaders teaching?” He did not refer to the laws of the land or the prevailing beliefs in the culture. Rather, He based His answer on three important foundation stones. These stones provide a point of reference in addressing marriage and family issues. Jesus pointed them back to the Scriptures, back to the beginning, and back to the Creator.

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” Matthew 19:4-6

God never intended any marriage to break up. He never wanted any child to go through the trauma and pain of seeing his or her parents divorce one another. His heart is broken and grieved when people divorce each other. Divorce is contrary to the original design of the Creator. The marriage union is an irrevocable union that cannot be broken without serious and damaging consequences. When couples go their separate ways, they never fully recover what they put into their marriage. They leave part of themselves with their partner and they take part of their partner with them.

It is like trying to recover your eggs and flour after they have been mixed together with other ingredients and baked into a cake. Once the cake is baked you no longer have eggs and flour. Instead, you have cake! You can’t then say, “I changed my mind, I want my eggs back so I can bake something else”. An irrevocable transaction has taken place and the original ingredients have blended together in such a way that they can no longer be separated. This fact is why divorce is one of the most painful experiences a human being can go through. Many who have gone through a divorce say it is worse than losing a loved one by death. At least with death, there is some closure and finality, whereas in divorce, the pain and hurt continues to be inflicted.

A few years back, a father received an email from his son. He told him that he had gotten a divorce. His father said, “I remember when I read those first few words, ‘I got a divorce,’ how devastating it was for me and my wife. Not only because it was my son that got the divorce, but because we lost someone that we loved dearly...our daughter-in-law. What is interesting to note is that they got the divorce six months prior to our son telling us. He said the reason was because he was afraid of being judged or condemned for their choices. If you have ever lost a loved one as a result of sickness or accident, you know how we felt as a result of their divorce. It is hard to imagine the pain.”

Upon hearing Jesus’ answer, the disciples asked Jesus why divorces were allowed under Moses. He declared that, although divorce was allowed under Moses, such a practice had never been God’s intention from the beginning. Instead, divorce was allowed due to the hardness of their hearts.

“Jesus replied, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.’” Matthew 19:8

“But it was not this way from the beginning.” This is the key phrase for us to remember. People try to tear their “cakes” apart and try to get their “eggs” back, even though when they do so, they are acting contrary to God’s original design. To minister to the many complicated issues families are facing, we need to rediscover God’s plan for marriage and family life. So, let’s turn our attention to the first two chapters in Genesis and seek to find out what that first family was like.

In His Image

Genesis 1:27-28 tells us that Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, so that first family was made up of individuals who reflected the nature and character of God. Adam and Eve were reflections of the God who had created them. They carried His “likeness” in their character. Who else in the Bible demonstrated God’s likeness and character in his life? Jesus Christ! In Colossians 1:15, the Bible says that Jesus Christ is “the image of the invisible God.” In John 14:9, Jesus said “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” And in Hebrews 1:3, He is described as “the exact representation of His (God’s) being.”

From these passages we can determine that Adam and Eve were like Jesus! They carried that same image and likeness in their lives. Thus, the original family was made up of people who were like Jesus. God’s original intention for the family was that every member of the family would be like Jesus. He wanted every husband to be like Jesus. He wanted every wife to be like Jesus. He wanted every parent and child to be like Jesus. He wanted everyone, including you and me, to grow up in a home with fathers and mothers like Jesus.

He wanted each child to have a loving, caring father. He wanted each home to be secure and each marriage relationship to be harmonious. God never wanted any child to experience the pain of a broken family or to live in a home filled with abuse, violence, or drunkenness. His heart is grieved and broken when families turn away from His original design and live in sinful and selfish ways.

What is the role of the husband in marriage? What is the role of the wife? Ephesians chapter 5 suggests that the role of the husband is to be the “head” of his family as Christ is the head of the church and that the role of the wife is to “submit” to her husband as the church submits to Christ. However, if we overemphasize these two concepts we can miss the most important role for both husbands and wives. They are called to be like Jesus! When a man becomes more and more like Jesus he becomes a better husband and father. The same is true for a woman. As she is conformed to the image of Christ, she becomes a better wife and mother. Becoming like Jesus moves the family closer to God’s original design.

Galatians 5:22-23 reveals what the image of God will look like in the life of someone who is filled with the Holy Spirit. That person will be loving, patient, kind, gentle, faithful, self-controlled, good, and full of peace and joy. These qualities will transform every family into one that reflects God’s original design. It is God’s will that we manifest this fruit of the Spirit in the

midst of our families as husbands, wives, sons and daughters.

A Perfect Male And A Perfect Female

The first marriage was made up of a perfect male and a perfect female. The male/female union was central to the first family and is still central to family life today. Marriage is more than a living arrangement between two people. It is a life-long covenant between a man, a woman and God. This covenant is the foundation of Biblical marriage and family life. It is a total commitment of the total person for the total life.

Adam and Eve lived in a sin-free, shame-free, environment and expressed something of God's glory in their relationship together. They were a compliment to one another and saw each other as a gift from God. They received each other as life-long companions and were not filled with conflict or competition. They were able to enjoy and celebrate their unity with each other and with the Lord. They recognized and enjoyed their uniqueness, but did not see their differences as an occasion for division. They had been created male and female, but they were also one with each other and with their Creator.

The Blessing Of God

God pronounced the first marriage "very good", and extended His blessing upon it. (Genesis 1:28,31). He walked in the garden and communed with Adam and Eve. He talked with them and they had unbroken fellowship together. God intended the family to be a place where His blessing would rest, where He would dwell, and where He would be the center of their family life. It is His presence that sets a Christian family apart from the non-Christian families in the world. A family without the presence of the Lord falls short of God's design. Without His blessing and presence, the family quickly can become a place where selfishness rules and strife prevails. Instead of peace and harmony, the family degenerates into a place of pain and hurt.

Marriage and family was God's idea, not man's idea. Marriage is not an earthly institution. It is a heavenly one. God is the creator of the home and He has an unwavering purpose for it. We have been created to glorify God and to have fellowship with Him. The family is the place where we begin to fulfill that purpose. May we always seek His blessing and give Him His rightful place in our families!

A Purpose And A Mission

When God created Adam and Eve, He said to them in Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth, and subdue it." Here, again, we see a central aspect of God's original purpose for the family. The first couple had a mission and a calling in life in relation to the world they lived in. They were called to extend God's kingdom and to multiply godly offspring throughout the entire world. The call to fruitfulness obviously meant bearing children and populating the world with descendants. God was interested in filling the earth with people that were made in His image. His desire was for godly offspring. God still has that same desire today.

The call to fruitfulness also involves extending the Lord's blessing and His kingdom throughout the nations of the world. Each individual Christian is called by God to bear spiritual children, to be fruitful and to multiply. In fact, Jesus said in John 15:8 that the Father is glorified when we bear much fruit. In Genesis 12:1-3, Abraham was told that "All peoples on the earth will be

blessed through you.” God first promised to bless Abraham and then He called Abraham to be a blessing to others. God doesn’t want His blessing to remain just within the confines of our own families. He wants to extend that blessing throughout the world. He wants families to catch a vision of bringing the good news of the Gospel to all people and to every nation. What a joy and privilege for families to have an active part in fulfilling this promise to be a blessing to all the peoples of the world!

The Family As Sin Made It

In Genesis chapter three we have recorded the entrance of sin into the human race. Sin caused an immediate change in the family and brought into it many things that God never intended families to experience. Romans 5:12 tells us that, “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned”. The impact of sin and death upon the family has been felt throughout every generation since Genesis chapter 3. Exodus 20:5 says “... I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me...”

In Genesis 5:3, we notice that there is a change in the way the Bible describes Adam’s son, Seth. “Adam... became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.” Seth is not referred to as being in the image of God, but rather, as being in the image of his earthly father, Adam. What a significant change! Since the fall of Adam, every child is born with a sinful nature in the likeness of Adam. Families, including yours and mine, are now made up of individuals who have been marred by sin.

As a result, no family now functions as God originally intended. Some families function reasonably well, while others are very destructive, being full of violence and abuse. All families fall short of the mark and, as a result, none of us grew up in a family that reflected God’s original design. We all, therefore, have a distorted view of family life. We have many misconceptions about the role of fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, sons and daughters. We also carry with us many painful memories that came from growing up in sin-marred families. No human father has loved his children the way God originally intended a father to love his child. No husband has perfectly loved his wife the way Christ loves the church.

Several changes took place in the family when sin came into the world. These changes ushered in attitudes and behaviors that were never intended to be part of family life. Let’s look at some of these changes and at the impact they have made upon families.

Fear-Adam’s first verbal response to the Lord after the fall was, “...I was afraid.” (Genesis 3:10) Adam and Eve had not known fear prior to the fall. Their relationship with God and with one another was characterized by love. Some families are filled with fear; fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of punishment, fear of the future, and fear of death, just to name a few. God never intended fear to be part of family life. In fact, I John 4:18 tells us, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear...and the one who fears is not perfected in love.” The level of fear in our lives is directly related to the lack of love we have experienced. People who grow up in homes where love is lacking are often filled with fear. Once these people begin to experience

God's unconditional and unfailing love, they often experience a deliverance from those fears. God's answer for fear is the perfect love of God.

Guilt/Shame-Adam and Eve immediately realized that they were naked once they had sinned. They then hid themselves from the Lord and from one other. (Genesis 3:7,8,10) Their sense of shame and guilt led them to avoid intimacy and exposure. Many families are ruled by shame and it destroys their ability to have intimate and honest relationships with one another. They become shame-based instead of love-based. Some parents use shame as the basis to get their children to obey them.

A missionary was watching a show on television about a young, Asian student who was going to school. This young boy did something wrong that was against the class rules. The method of correction was to bring this young boy to the front of the class and have another student shame him in front of the rest of the class. Then he was required to wear a certain sweater full of holes, to shame him even further. The missionary asked himself, "What kind of character quality was imparted to this young boy? I am sure that he will never again disobey the class rules. On the other hand, because of the shame that was put on him, he inherited a spirit of fear that he will never forget. It will be difficult for him to trust anyone ever again."

This little schoolboy was shamed to correct behavior. This will be a burden to him for the rest of his life. Can you imagine what would have happened if he was lovingly corrected and given the opportunity to make right choices? God does not shame us into obedience. Rather, He draws us to himself by His love and acceptance.

Shame is very destructive since it conveys a message that something is fundamentally wrong with a person. It says that you are defective in some way and that you are a bad person. God wants our families to be open and shame-free. The cycle of shame can only be broken through the redemptive power of the Gospel and the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

Broken Relationships-Relationships immediately broke down once sin entered the family in Genesis chapter 3. The most important relationship that broke down was the one with the Lord. Adam and Eve immediately lost their intimate communion with the Lord. They were driven from the garden and lost their access to the tree of life. They were alienated, cut off, and separated from God as a result of their sin. They were originally created for intimacy with God, but now they found themselves in spiritual darkness.

They also experienced a painful breakdown in their own relationship. No longer did they feel comfortable in one another's presence. There were portions of their lives that they now hid from each other and they began to experience a less-than-honest relationship. Adam and Eve lost that innocent, open, and vulnerable relationship they initially enjoyed. Sin opened the door for walls, barriers, and distance to develop in family relationships. God created the family for intimacy and closeness, but sin brought in separation.

Blame- In Genesis 3:11 God asks Adam a direct question, "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" Adam's evasive answer in Genesis 3:12 was, "The woman you put here with me..." Thus, Adam sought to shift the blame for his sin to his wife and to the

God! He was unwilling to accept personal responsibility and to acknowledge his own sin. The Lord then turned to Eve and asked her, “What is this you have done?” (verse 13) She blamed the serpent. Neither Adam nor Eve was willing to accept personal responsibility for his or her actions.

How often we see this pattern in family life today! Husbands blame their wives. Wives blame their husbands. Children blame their parents. Brothers and sisters blame each other. People are defensive, filled with pride, and justify their wrong actions. They don’t take personal responsibility for what they have done or said. They attack each other and are slow to humble themselves, apologize and seek forgiveness. These attitudes build up barriers in families and destroy relationships. Shifting the blame to others is a tragic consequence of sin’s impact on the family.

Pain-Sin brought a multiplication of pain in childbirth for Eve. (Genesis 3:16) It also brought pain and toil for Adam in his labor. (Genesis 3:17-19) Physical pain, emotional pain, relationship pain and spiritual pain entered the family after the fall. Families soon became places of wounding and heartache instead of places of comfort and joy.

Some of our greatest joys in life come from our families, but at the same time, our families can be the source of our deepest wounds. Some of our most painful memories come from those we love the most. Family members can inflict deep emotional pain, physical abuse, and mental anguish that affect us for years to come. It seems that pain is being multiplied in epidemic proportions in many families today. God originally intended the family to be a place of blessing, not a place of pain. He wanted our families to be the source of joy and comfort.

Oppression/Abuse Of Position And Power- In Genesis 3:16 the Lord said to the woman, “Your desire shall be for your husband and he will rule over you.” Abuse of power and position was another consequence of sin. In many families, husbands abuse their wives and fathers abuse their children. These actions are contrary to God’s original design of loving, respectful, relationships. God never intended for family members to dominate, control, or intimidate one another. Such practices are a corruption of the use of power and position.

Death/Murder/Violence- God told Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:17 that they would surely die once they ate of the tree of good and evil. Romans 5:12 tells us that, “...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” God told Adam he would now, “Return to the ground since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.” (Genesis 3:19) In Genesis 3:22 the Lord drove Adam and Eve from the garden and said, “He (Adam) must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” Physical and spiritual death entered the human race as a result of sin.

In Genesis chapter four, verses one to twelve, we have the account of the first murder in the Bible. Cain killed his own brother, Abel. Sin opened the door for murder and violence to enter families. Numerous other examples of murder and violence soon appear in the Biblical record. We read of sons murdering their fathers, parents sacrificing their babies to idols, and brothers killing their brothers. Family members are guilty of committing some of the most violent crimes

recorded in the Bible. These acts are the tragic consequences of sin and they are contrary to God's original design for the family.

Rivalry/Jealousy/Bitterness- The Bible records numerous examples of rivalry and jealousy among family members. We already mentioned the rivalry that existed between Cain and Abel that led to Abel's death. Other examples include Jacob and Esau, Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, and, of course, Jacob and Laban. Each of these examples reveals how destructive sin can be in tearing apart family relationships. Sin breaks up a family.

Some families are so filled with strife and bitterness that they no longer talk to one another. The family is broken up into factions and there is little hope of reconciliation between the various members. People criticize each other. They gossip about one another and their hearts are filled with hostility. Their only hope is the reconciling love of Jesus Christ.

Drunkenness- Genesis 9:20-24 records the first incident of drunkenness in the Bible. Noah planted a vineyard and became drunk when he took some of the wine. He lay uncovered in his tent and his son Ham entered the tent and saw his father's nakedness. He then told his two brothers, who were outside the tent. When Noah found out what he had done, he pronounced a curse on Ham's descendants.

Alcohol abuse and drug addiction are two of the most destructive issues facing families. Just as Noah's family experienced tragic consequences as a result of drunkenness, many families are torn apart by alcohol and drugs. God never intended drunkenness and addiction to be part of our family experience.

Deception/Manipulation/Dishonesty- The book of Genesis records several examples of families that were torn apart by deception, manipulation, lying and dishonesty. Abraham lied to the Egyptians about his wife Sarah in Genesis 12:10-13. He told them that she was his sister. He was afraid they would kill him and let her live because she was so beautiful. In Genesis 27 Rebekah and Jacob deceived Isaac in order to receive the blessing intended for Esau. Genesis 29 describes the manipulation and dishonesty that took place between Jacob and Laban for over 20 years. Sin corrupted family relationships through deception, manipulation, and dishonesty.

One well-known Bible-teacher wrote, "From a distance we are all beautiful people. Well-dressed, nice smile, friendly looking, cultured, under control, at peace. But what a different picture when someone comes up close and gets in touch! What appeared so peaceful is really a mixture of insecurity and uncertainty. In our lives grow weeds of lust, greed, selfishness and pretending to be something that we are not. We are a people that are clouded with a fear of being found out."

The truth is that people are afraid of being known for who they really are. At a distance they are beautiful and something to see. Up close they are tarnished. This is why the Lord means so much to us. He is intimately acquainted with all our ways. Not one of us is hidden from His sight. All things are open and laid bare before Him. When we give in to sin through deception, manipulation, and dishonesty, we destroy our family relationships.

Incest/Rape/Lust/Sexual Perversion- Sin brought a defilement and perversion of our God-given sexuality. God judged the people of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. One of their most prominent sins was sexual perversion. Amnon, David's son raped Tamar, one of David's daughters in II Samuel 13. Absalom, Tamar's brother, later killed Amnon for violating his sister.

The accounts of lust and sexual perversion listed in the Bible are too numerous to mention. The list goes on and on. Sexuality is a gift from God, but sin has twisted the expression of this precious and beautiful gift. God intended human sexuality to be expressed within the protective boundaries of a marriage covenant and all expressions outside that boundary are harmful and destructive.

The family, as sin has made it, is a tragic and heart-breaking picture. All the consequences mentioned above were present in families before the last chapter of Genesis. The impact of sin on the family was swift and far-reaching. Surely, God grieves over the condition of the human family since the fall. He grieves over the condition of your family, as well.

Thankfully, He has not left us to the mercy of sin and its impact upon the family. He sent a redeemer to restore family life to what He originally intended. The Bible says that, "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." (Romans 5:20) Nowhere is that truth more evident than within the family. Sin has had a devastating effect upon family life. It has produced much pain and heartache. God's grace, however, has been extended to the family in an abundant manner. Families can overcome the most devastating consequences of sin. God's grace will be the focus of our next section entitled, **The Family As Grace Restores It.**

As you finish reading this section, please take a few minutes and reflect on the condition of your family. Contrast your family with the family as God created it. Look at the areas where sin has impacted your family. Ask the Lord to pour out His grace upon your family, so that it can be restored to what He originally intended. God bless you as you do.

Application Prayer

Father, thank you for the vision you have for the family and for the model of family life that is revealed through the Trinity. I pray that my family will be restored to its original purpose. Fill my family with the love of God. Tear down the walls of division that have been there and restore unity in our relationships.

I commit myself to become more like Christ. I want to fulfill my God-given role in my family. I acknowledge that sin has influenced my family. I ask you to set us free from every generational bondage that is affecting us.

Break down the strongholds of fear and shame. I pray that my family will be ruled by love and not by fear. Set us free from condemnation and heal our broken relationships. Help us to accept responsibility for our own sins and to not project blame on others.

Deliver us from manipulation, dishonesty, and deception. Keep us from abusing our position or power. Deliver us from rivalry, jealousy and revenge. Purify our hearts and keep us far from lust and sexual bondage. In Jesus name! Amen.