

# OpenTheo

## Families vs Individuals (Part 1)



### **Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture** - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the importance of families in Christianity and how they are under attack in modern society. He argues that families are God's creation and their destruction can lead to negative consequences in society. Gregg emphasizes the importance of whole families being saved, rather than just individuals, and how the loyalty to Christ should supersede biological family ties. Throughout the talk, he provides examples from the Bible to support his argument.

### **Transcript**

A Radically Christian Counterculture. That's what the series is about. It's called Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture.

The things that I'm sharing in this series are not always definitive. They're not the final answers, which is why I say Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture. We don't just hear these things and suddenly we're there, but these are the directions we need to explore.

These are the directions we need to rethink if we are, as the body of Christ, going to reflect in our behavioral norms, attitudes, beliefs, and so forth, the things that are to be distinctively representative of Christ's kingdom. And tonight we're going to be talking on the topic, the culture of families, and confronts the culture of individuals. I realize that's a strange sounding title, but if you think about it a moment, it comes clear.

Some of the subjects we're talking about in this series is the culture of life confronts the culture of death, the culture of peace confronts the culture of war, the culture of self-denial confronts the culture of self-love, and so forth. These are ways of showing the contrast between what is true of the Christian's culture, which in our present society would be a radically Christian counterculture to that of the dominant culture, on the one hand, and what is considered normative in our society at the present time, on the other hand. Now, I want to start with a story that Steve Majors shared with me.

I believe when he was back east going through a seminar on law and the Constitution, and so forth, under Howard Phillips and others. He came back and he shared something

with me that reflected my own views very well, but Howard Phillips said it much better. When Doug Phillips, the son of Howard Phillips, was nine years old, his father sat him down and said, I need to explain something to you, son.

He said, now, your mother is just as smart as I am, and she can vote as intelligently as I can, and so forth, but when they passed the 19th Amendment, which is the amendment that granted suffrage or voting privileges to women, he says, this nation ceased to be a nation of families and became a nation of individuals, and that's a very important thing to notice. It's not very popular, certainly isn't politically correct today, to challenge the wisdom of women's suffrage. Women's suffrage is the issue of women having the right to vote.

Suffragettes existed back in the late part of the 19th century and in the early part of this century, and it was 1920 when the 19th Amendment was passed, granting women the same rights as men to vote, and that, of course, is hailed by all, I'm sure, including modern Christians, most Christians, in fact, as a great advance in the rights of women. I mean, after all, recognizing women are equal to men is a good thing, but women are, in some respects, equal to men, in some respects, superior to men, and in some respects, no doubt, inferior to men. They're not the same thing as men, but they are certainly not less important or less competent than men, and because of that, people assume that for women to have the right to vote, it just follows from the fact that they're equal.

They're equal persons, they're equal in value, they're equal in intelligence and competence. Of course, they should be equal in their rights to vote. However, although I'd never heard Howard Phillips' comment before, probably a week or two or so ago, when Steve shared that with me, I had for a long time thought about this very thing and had the same conclusion, and I've met very few Christians who wanted to take so radical a stand, but it is, if we're going to be radically Christian, we might as well think like Christians.

Before women had the right to vote, the heads of the households voted for their families, and therefore, that vote counted for the opinions and the position of a family in America. It was not necessary to add women's votes unless they were going to vote against their husbands, as individuals thinking differently than their husbands and supporting a different agenda. Now, don't get me wrong.

I'm not saying that women today shouldn't vote, but if you ask me, is it a good idea for a nation to grant voting rights to women, I would say, why? Why is this necessary? Now, I realize there's a few women, a small percentage, that are not married women, and therefore, this particular statement wouldn't apply to them, but certainly, the vast majority of women are married or hope to be married, and they are under the headship of a household, and if every woman was going to vote exactly the same way their husbands voted, it wouldn't make any difference. Why should they have to vote? You'd

have the exact same percentage of votes for and against a certain proposition. If every husband and wife were going to vote exactly alike, the only way that women's voting would make a difference is if they're going to vote against their husbands, and if they're voting against their husbands, then the nation has become not a nation of households and families expressing their wishes through their head, but a nation of individuals, including wives who might, if they have a different opinion than their husbands, vote contrary to their husbands and cancel his vote out.

Now, some people say, well, why not? Wife might be more intelligent than her husband. Well, that's a very individualistic thinking, American way of thinking, actually. The fact is that the Bible presents a different picture of society.

Throughout the Bible, in the Old and the New Testament, society is made up of families. Families have a certain structure and a certain order. They have a certain headship and a certain way of functioning within themselves and with reference to society outside of themselves.

I'd like to talk to you about that because our modern culture is so much a culture of individuals and not a culture of families that we can say that what is usually referred to as the culture war is little more than a war against the family. The secular dominant culture is culturally at war with Christianity, but the place that manifests most is on issues that are related to the family. Is that not true? I mean, there'd be very few exceptions to that.

Almost everything that we call the culture war issues is where dominant culture is making war against households, against the family, against the whole institution of the family. So much so that those on the more conservative side of the culture war often their platform is considered to be family values. If a candidate wants to reach the conservative element and get their votes, he has to stand up pretty strongly for what he calls family values.

What are family values? Well, there's a lot of people who say they believe in family values, but they don't stand for, I think, what the Bible says on the subject in my judgment and I want to discuss some of those issues. You see, as I said in the beginning of this series, a lot of Christians of the conservative sort recognize that we're in a culture war and recognize that we need to somehow have a Christian culture or a restoration of a Christian culture. But what they're thinking of as a Christian culture is the culture of the 50s.

The culture of, represented so well by the sitcoms like *Leave It to Beaver* and *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Father Knows Best* and those kinds of things where you had an intact two-parent family. Generally speaking, the husband was the breadwinner, the wife was largely a homemaker, the kids just went off to school and came home to... They weren't latchkey kids. They came home when mom was there.

Dad came home at night. He was a good dad. She was a good mom.

A very pleasant situation. Good feelings. You get good feelings from those TV shows and so forth.

But when most Christians talk about a need for family values, they've got that image in their mind. Leave It to Beaver. And they're thinking, you know, we need to get back to that kind of a time.

But I'd like to suggest to you that it was the families of the 50s that spawned the children of the 60s and 70s. And there was something terribly wrong with the children of the 60s and 70s. I know because I was one of them.

There was something really bad about my generation. They had no sense of authority and what they knew of authority they rejected purposefully. They rejected authority.

They questioned authority. They did not accept morals of their parents. They did not accept the political opinions of their parents.

They didn't accept the styles of their parents. They, in fact, revolted against the whole culture of their parents. And then was manifested probably more than any time in recent history, a rejection of parental authority and of family culture.

Now that wasn't the first time in history of this country. Bob Broussard was telling me about some book he was reading and I found it rather interesting because it coincided with something I'd heard a long time ago to some extent. I had heard that when, from the time they established public education, there was a counterculture or a generation gap between parents and kids every 15 years.

Now Bob was sharing with me, he's reading a book that's a little more exact than that. He says, no, the first big thing like that in America was back in 1830. And then the next one was in the 1890s with the gay 90s.

And then came the roaring 20s in the 1920s. Of course, that started with the women's suffrage in 1920 is when women's suffrage passed. And then came the roaring 20s where the women did things deliberately that were countercultural to their parents.

They wore shorter dresses. The women smoked in public, drank in public. They weren't allowed to do that before.

They bobbed their hair. They did all kinds of things that their mothers found scandalous. And they were called flappers was what the style was called in the roaring 20s.

And what he was saying is that the gap between these various cultural revolutions shortened each time from 1830 to 1890 was 60 years. From 1890 to 1920 was 30 years. And then 15 years later in the 35 and so forth, you've got the depression and the war

and so forth coming on.

And you probably don't have as obvious a counterculture there because everyone's occupied with the with that. But then when you come out of the World War II, you've got, you know, eventually you've got the beatniks and you've got then the hippies and then you've got whatever it is we have now. I'm not sure what we have now.

But what we have here is a tendency for young people to try to find themselves apart from reference to their family roots. That began largely with public education. It's one of the biggest, biggest enemies of the family was public education.

But and I'll tell you why a little later. The point is, though, we now live in a culture where people do not think of themselves as having their identity in a family, but they have their identity or they're trying to find their identity as individuals. In the 60s, my generation was fond of saying that they're searching for themselves.

They're looking for themselves. Why? You know, where do they think they went? You know, I mean, there they are right there talking to you saying they're looking for themselves. All they need is a mirror and they'll find themselves.

But that's what they were really saying is they're seeking to know what their identity is. And they're trying to find their identity as it were, as an atomized, disconnected individual. You know, don't want to be determined by what someone else is doing or by what my parents did or or what the society says I should do.

I want to be me. I want to do my own thing. And I want to identify myself as without reference to other people.

Of course, the irony of it is that those who are seeking themselves simply identified themselves with another solidarity, their generation. And you know, those that were so concerned about nonconformity simply fell into another kind of conformity. You know, the hippies all looked alike.

And what happened was they substituted a different family, as it were, for the families that God gave them. Everybody that God brings in the world, he brings into the world in a family. God created families.

And we specifically have that stated in Psalm 68, 6, where it says God sets the solitary in families. Solitary means those who are individuals separated from groups. God puts them in families.

God did not intend for us to be, strictly speaking, so many six billion individuals on the planet. Now, we are individuals and we have individual responsibility. We're not supposed to all, you know, march in lockstep with any particular other persons.

And we'll find that out as we appeal to some things in the New Testament a little later tonight, but I think tonight, maybe next week. But at the same time, while we have individual responsibility before God for our relationship with Him, for our faith and for our walk with Him, our identity, to a much larger extent than now is the case, is intended to be found in the context of families. Do you know that in Jesus' day, well, in Jesus' day, what would people refer to Him as? People in the street, what would they call Him? Jesus, of course.

But if they, well, which Jesus? There's a lot of Jesus's around. What Jesus are you talking about? What would they say? Carpenter's son, son of Joseph, because that's what they considered. They figured Joseph was His father.

In those days, a man was called and identified by who his father was. Simon Peter was referred to as Simon Bar-Jonah. In Hebrew, Bar means son of Jonah.

Even one of the disciples, Bar-Tholomew, his name means son of Tholomew. And even in our modern society, there's a great number of names like Johnson and Robertson and Peterson and Anderson and a lot of other sons that bear witness to an earlier age when people were more specifically identified with who their father was, whose son they were, than who they personally were as an individual. Now, it's much more flattering to my ego to think that who I am is much more important in terms of what I personally accomplish and what I personally, you know, can get a reputation for myself and so forth than to have to just be kind of part of the, just a cog in the wheel of a family that's gone on for generations.

But the question is not whether my pride likes it. The question is, what is God's plan? And what would it be like if Christians found God's plan and lived according to it? It'd be very different than it is now, even in the churches. The whole idea of having youth groups in churches is a symptom of this whole thing.

It's a generation gap thing. You know, the assumption is that these kids are more related to others on their same journey of their age than they are to the generation that spawned them, their own biological parents. Therefore, it doesn't make sense for them to go to church with their parents.

They don't have the same interests. They don't have the same, you know, goals. Put them in with other kids their own age who are going to be interested in immature kid stuff because that's what they are, they're immature kids and they relate with these people.

The real issue that many young people are wrestling with of identity would really be resolved if people, if a society was functioning as the Bible teaches. Those individuals wandering around Israel in the days of the Bible, they knew whose son they were. And other people knew whose son they were because they were a continuation of their

father's life.

As a matter of fact, in the Old Testament, there was very little known, very little was revealed in the Old Testament about eternal life. You know that? Almost everything we know about eternal life is in the New Testament. Very, very little is said in the Old Testament on the subject, a few things.

But the average man, before Jesus came and brought life and immortality to light, as the Bible says he did, the average man hoped for immortality through his offspring. And that's why it was so important to people to have sons especially. Not that sons are better than daughters.

In many cases, sons can bring more grief than daughters bring to their parents. But the fact is, a son can do something a daughter can't. And that is that a son can perpetuate the father's name and identity and so forth.

Was this important to God or was this just some kind of a social thing? Well, read the Old Testament. When Joshua conquered the promised land, he divided the land up into family units. These units were supposed to stay in the family generation after generation after generation.

Now, I'm not saying we have to do that with our property now. We're not under the law and so forth. I'm just talking about the mentality that was underscoring this thing here.

It was against the law for property to pass out of the family perpetually. If the great, great, great grandson of somebody in Joshua's day was poor and he had a bad year for crops or something and he had some property that his ancestors had, he could sell that property to somebody. But not forever.

Only 50 years. 50 years later, it would have to go back to his family whether he paid it off or not. It had to stay in the family.

The land cannot be sold in perpetuity, the Bible said in the law. God wanted it to stay within the family groups. Now, that doesn't mean that we're under that law and we have to do that kind of thing with our real estate.

What I'm saying is that God had the perpetuation of a man's life through his offspring as something that was of value, something that was considered to be normative. And you know what? Most sons knew that. Most sons in biblical times took on their father's trade.

The Bible makes that very clear in a number of places. The father taught his son this trade. Jesus even learned the trade of carpentry, but God called him out of that to do something different than what Joseph had done, but until he was 30 years old, and that's a long time for a person who only lives 33 years and who's got a big mission to do before he dies.

He's going to live only 33 years and he's going to be on a major mission to save the world, but the first 30 of those years he spends hammering nails, not doing anything to save the world. Imagine how that must have felt. But Jesus, we don't know what was going through Jesus' mind while he was hammering those nails, but if it was me, I'd be chomping at the bit saying, you know, God, this table, it's all going to burn that I'm making here.

Their soul's dying. When are you going to let me go out and do some preaching? But 30 of his 33 years he spent simply perpetuating the family business of his adopted father, Joseph, which is what most sons did till the day they died. Now, I don't want anyone to misunderstand me.

I'm not saying that the conventions of the Jewish culture or the biblical culture in all these respects need to be duplicated and perpetuated to the letter and in detail. There are some different dynamics that the New Testament brings in with reference to whole family identity and so forth. But the New Testament does not abolish the importance of the family.

In fact, it presupposes the importance of the family all the way through. Now, let me tell you why the family is important from God's perspective. There are two very important reasons why households as units are important to God.

One of them is for the same reason that the tabernacle was important to God. When God gave Moses instructions about how to build the tabernacle, He told Moses several times, He says, now you see to it that you make this in all respects according to the pattern that I showed you on the mount. In other words, God had revealed to Moses a picture of this tabernacle.

He said, now when you build it, when you have these guys build it, make sure they do it just the way I said. Why? Because that was the house of God and it reflected the spiritual house of God. It was a picture of heavenly things.

And if they changed the details of the house of God on earth, it would misconstrue the information about the spiritual that God wished to communicate through that. Now, the Bible indicates that human households, families, are important for the same reason. We see this, of course, going back to the first statement about family, I suppose.

Well, not the very first, but the most important statement about family in the early chapters of Genesis. This is Genesis 2.24. One reason I know that's important is because it was quoted by Jesus and it was quoted by Paul, both in very important defining moments, defining Christian morality and so forth. Genesis 2.24 says, For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they too shall become one flesh.



Now, that's the beginning of a family. Now, you might say, No, that's just the beginning of a marriage, Steve. Don't you know that's a verse about marriage.

That's not a verse about family. Well, you know, in those days they didn't have any way of preventing a marriage from becoming a family. We have technology now that will help us to prevent a marriage from becoming a family, if we so choose.

But that was never intended. That first marriage was intended for what? Well, God said He made male and female. He said, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

How are they going to do that? They're going to have kids. They're going to have a family. God instituted the family.

But what we learn about that from Paul in Ephesians chapter 5 is that that verse, which basically tells of the institution of the family originally, had a spiritual correspondence that God intended to communicate, just like the tabernacle itself had such. There are heavenly spiritual realities. The earthly institution of the tabernacle was to reflect those and teach those.

Likewise, the earthly institution of the family is to teach the same, according to Ephesians 5, verses 31 and 32. Paul says, For this cause, he's quoting Genesis 2, 24. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined unto his wife and they too shall be one flesh.

That's the quote. Then Paul gives his comment, verse 32, This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Now, what Paul is telling us is that the institution of marriage and the family isn't something that was arbitrary.

God didn't just decide, Well, I think I'll just make a man and a woman and have them start something up. But He could have done it differently. Let's say He could have had a man and three women or three men and a woman.

I mean, could He have done anything He wanted in this? No. He had to do it the way He did in order to reflect what He was trying to reflect. That is one reason why it's so ghastly to hear people talking about the possibility of legalizing homosexual marriage or any other kind of marriage other than biblical monogamy, heterosexual monogamy.

The reason is because marriage isn't something that man came up with and it is not, therefore, something that man has the right to tinker with. You see, the evolutionary view of man, which our society accepts, is, you know, marriage doesn't exist among animals. Although there are some species that remain monogamous throughout life, they don't have covenantal relationships like people do.

The idea of a covenantal relationship exists only among humans. And the assumption that humans arose from animals means that at some point some animal, you know,

became human, but they didn't have marriage and eventually they developed it. They eventually decided, let's have this thing called marriage.

And then it became normal for everyone after that. On that view, of course, marriage is just one of those things that society came up with. Society invented it.

Society defined it. And why can't society change it if they want to? You know, if society decides that that old fashioned kind of marriage isn't really up to date anymore, why can't society decide, well, let's include all caring relationships as marriage. Let's call it marriage.

You can't do that because society didn't invent marriage. That's the point. The evolutionary scheme is not true.

The Bible tells us that marriage was ordained and created by God and it was created to portray something spiritual, something eternal. And any monkeying with the machine is going to bring about a bad product. It's going to change the message.

It's going to mar the truth. And mankind does not have the right to change what God has ordained. Jesus put it this way, what God has joined together, He's referring to marriage, let not man put asunder.

But at the same time, let not man join together what God has put asunder. I mean, the thing is, God did it this way, that's the way it's got to be done. And it's not just marriage.

Marriage is just where a family begins. It's the family. You see, throughout the Bible, the most common imagery that is used of God's relationship with His people is that of the family.

God is called the Father. We are called His children. We are referred to as brothers and sisters.

This is all family talk. As a matter of fact, although we have many images, different kinds of images of God's relationship to His people, we've got, you know, the body image, you've got the bride, you've got the temple image where living stones built into a spiritual temple. You've got a lot of different images like that.

An army, soldiers, you know, warriors in God's army. A lot of different imagery of the church, but the most common in the Bible is the family image. You will not find any metaphor of the church in the Bible that is mentioned as frequently as that metaphor of the family.

Because it's not only marriage as a picture of Christ in the church, it's also parent and child relationship as a picture of God and His people. That's another aspect of family. God says in Malachi, you know, a servant honors his master and a son reveres his father,

but if I'm a master, where's my honor? If I'm a father, where's my reverence? In Isaiah chapter 1, He says, I have nurtured and brought up children.

They've rebelled against me. God sees man's defection from himself as like the inappropriate rebellion of a son against a father. In other words, a disruption in family life on the human level is something God is aghast at because it reflects a marring of what the relationship should be between us as children of God and God Himself.

Paul says in Ephesians 5, 1, be imitators of God as dear children. Just like, you know, there's children imitate their father. Well, if children stop imitating their father, that scripture suddenly is emptied of all meaning.

If a generation comes up where children, and it may have already arrived, probably arrived a couple generations back, where children don't imitate their fathers, then people read that verse, be imitators of God as dear children. What do you mean? Children don't imitate anyone. They're on their own journey to find themselves.

No, the Bible indicates children are imitators of their father. Jesus said, the son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the father do, that he doeth in like manner because the father loves the son and teaches his son to do all things the way he does them. Jesus is referring to the normal, customary apprenticeship of a son in the family business under his father.

His father teaches his son the trade secrets that he's learned from his father and his father's father and so forth. And Jesus, of course, is using, that's John chapter 5, where Jesus says that Jesus is using it as an analogy of why he does things the way his father does. But the point is, the family relationship such as God ordained is intended as a picture of spiritual and eternal realities.

And when we change it, or defect from it, or neglect it, we might as well build a new tabernacle with, you know, different size and shape stuff in it. You know, I mean, it's just as much a sacrilege to alter the nature of the family. Now, in my saying that, I hope some of you maybe had chills go down your back when you think of our culture today, the world's culture.

How that divorce, homosexuality, you know, deliberate childlessness and so forth, these are all issues that are part of our modern culture, but they're not part of biblical family norms. And it's so normal in our family. You know, just, you know, mothers working outside the home, kids coming home without any parents to guide them.

Fathers who go on long business trips and, you know, they're gone more often than their home. These things simply are not biblical norms. And they are damaging to a culture or society that adopts these changes.

But they're not just damaging to the society, they're damaging to God. They're

damaging to the witness that God intended the family to be. And that is the first reason why this is so important to God, this family stuff.

Because it is a divinely ordained picture of spiritual realities. And we have a greater obligation to be faithful to proclaim God's message in our words and our relationships than we have any obligation to seek our own personal fulfillment and happiness, which our generation, my generation decided was the most important thing, to seek happiness. My parents' generation seemed to think that most important thing was to seek their children's happiness.

And they communicated that to their children pretty effectively. Because the children said, yeah, they're right. My happiness is the issue.

My parents proved it. They lavished everything on me. They made every sacrifice to make me happy.

You know, a lot of parents are wondering, how can I keep my kids happy? They're so petulant. They're so spoiled. How do I keep them happy? The answer is, you're not obligated to keep them happy.

The Bible does not obligate parents to make their children happy. It obligates parents to make their children holy. And God, though He is a very generous and ready to bless and ready to be kind to us, it is not His task to make us happy, His children.

It's His task to bring us up in a way that will be good for us forever. And sometimes that means at the sacrifice of our momentary happiness. But see, my parents' generation.

Now, my parents were not as guilty of this as many parents of my parents. My parents were good Christian folks. And they didn't fail in this as much as some did of their generation.

But my parents' generation tended to have... They went through the Depression. And they came out to a time of unprecedented prosperity. And it says, I'm never going to make my children be deprived like I was in the Depression.

So, they had all this prosperity. And they just lavished it, lavished it, lavished it on their kids, thinking they're doing their kids a favor. And what they taught their kids was, you know, you are the center of the world.

And you ought to have everything lavished upon you. And so, our generation became convinced that, you know, my happiness is really a big thing, a big important thing. It's hard for us to imagine that several generations ago, anyone who said that they were seeking their own happiness would have been looked at as if he was a borderline criminal and maybe a nut.

Because you don't seek your own happiness. You seek to be... You seek to fulfill your obligations. You seek to, you know, to be a good person.

You seek to, you know, be helpful to society. And most people found that it's a relatively happy existence doing those things. But you don't seek happiness as an end in itself.

That is a result of a cultural shift that Christians in the church often have not recognized as an aberrant thing. And it's because of families have gone askew. We need to have as much... We need to be as conscientious about following God's pattern for family as Moses had to be about following God's pattern for the tabernacle and for the same reasons.

Another reason that God, I believe, is so concerned about the family is because the family unit is the foundation for society. And it says in Psalm 11, 3, if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The second part of that verse is a rhetorical question. It's implied the righteous cannot do much of anything effectively.

If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? And that is certainly true in any society. When the foundational building blocks of society, the family, is destroyed, there's not much that the righteous element can do to improve things. And there's a reason for that because of our third point, because the family is the primary means of transmission of godliness.

Before I get to that point, I want to say about the foundation of society. One of the things that the family serves us in and being foundational and kept, if we stay faithful to the biblical pattern, is that the family teaches us the concept of hierarchy. Our society is addicted to the abolition of hierarchy.

What is hierarchy? Hierarchy simply means some people are subordinate to other people. Some people are in positions of authority over others. And those who are in authority are to be submitted to.

That those who are subordinate are to sacrifice their preferences in order to please and to serve the interests of the ones that they're subordinate to. We understand this still a little bit. Those of us who are old enough to remember a time when in jobs, employees had to do what the employer wanted them to do.

As I understand it now, there's not much of that left even in the job market. That's probably the last place it went. But the idea of hierarchy, we don't allow hierarchy in government in this country.

As far as I'm concerned, I'm glad there isn't. But we're all supposed to be equal. We all have an equal vote.

We all have an equal say, supposedly. There's a government by the people, for the

people, of the people. And everybody's equal.

We have no kings. Now, ours, I believe, was the first society to experiment with this. And most of the free world, so-called, is free because they followed our example of this experiment.

I mean, there are very few parts of the world that haven't followed us. Very few nations have not followed us in adopting some kind of democratic model as opposed to a monarchical model. I think there's only one nation still on the earth that has a king.

That's Tonga. I could be wrong. I think I heard that.

That's the last kingdom on the world. But most other nations have either gone to other kind of tyranny or else they become democracies. And probably the democracies are more common, at least have grown in number faster.

And therefore, our country is the first to experiment with this. Before that, all countries had kings or queens or both. And there was an understanding of hierarchy.

The king is the boss of the people. Now, the king often abused his authority. In biblical times as well as times since then, the king wasn't always a good guy.

And often they were very bad guys. But people still understood that there was a hierarchy in government. For the past 200 years or more, a little more, there has been no king that had any say over this country here that we live in.

And we are many generations into this thing. So we understand. We don't have a king.

And I'm glad we don't. Let me just say this. I'm not saying let's raise up a king.

I don't think we need one. And I don't want one. But what I'm saying is we need to be aware of how this political environment has affected our awareness of certain other issues that have to do with hierarchy.

The opposite of hierarchy is egalitarianism. These are the two words for these two opposite things. We live in a society and a culture that's going for egalitarianism.

That means everybody's equal about everything. There's basically very few distinctions between people. Even kids in school, they want to eliminate grades because it's not egalitarian enough.

There's too many kids who get good grades and too many kids who get bad grades. It just doesn't seem equal. So we'll just throw out grading altogether and we'll just say everyone got the answer right.

Because we're very egalitarian here. No one's better than anyone else. But God set up

things in the world that it's a hierarchical universe.

We see this many places in Scripture. But one of the places it's stated most briefly, I suppose, is 1 Corinthians 11, 3, where Paul says, But I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. Now that's a hierarchy.

You've got God the Father is the head of Christ. Christ is the head of every man and the husband is the head of the wife. That's a hierarchy.

That's not egalitarianism. But that's not the only hierarchy. The Bible talks about servants and masters.

Servants submit to your masters and so forth. It talks about children submitting to their parents. It even talks about subjects submitting to their rulers and so forth.

The idea that everybody's not on an even footing in society is taken for granted and taught in the Scripture. Now, the Bible does say that everyone's on... I think it does. Now, Calvinists don't agree with me.

But I believe the Bible says that all people are on an equal footing in terms of salvation. That is, all people can be saved if they will do the same thing. If they'll repent and believe, they can be saved.

It doesn't matter if they're born rich or poor, or what race they are, or what gender they are, or whether they're young or old. It doesn't matter. All people are on equal footing when it comes to salvation.

They all get saved the same way. It's not easier for some than... I should say it's not... the load isn't lightened for some more than for others. But apart from that, in terms of social activity in society, God has created hierarchy.

And the basic unit of that society is the family, which is the ultimate hierarchy. You've got the parents are over the children. And the husband is head over the wife.

Now, you know, that's unpopular to say today, especially the part about the husband being over the wife. Most people who would struggle with that are still willing to say the parents should be over the children. But that's... even that is eroding as a concept in our society.

It's getting more to the place that the state should be over the children, not the parents. But the fact of the matter is, there's not too many people ready to turn over the whole steering wheel of society to the children. They recognize there's some need for hierarchy there.

But the way God set things up, there's two links of that hierarchy. You've got the children

under the parents, and among the parents, the wife is subject to the husband. And this is something God created.

This is something that godly societies have never had any problem with. And even some ungodly societies have never had any problem with that particular hierarchy. That's just been understood.

It's been... even where they didn't have divine revelation, they knew it just by common sense. Our society, however, has not only rejected divine revelation, they've also been very short on... in the supply of common sense. And therefore, the hierarchical structure of society, that God has ordained, which is depicted primarily in the family.

After all, the family is the only God-ordained hierarchy. Do you know that? I mean, in society there are, in some cases, kings and subjects, or masters and servants, employers and employees, but those aren't ordained by God. The scripture doesn't anywhere say that God ordained the institution of slavery, or the institution of monarchs, or the institution of employment, but he did ordain the family.

And that is the unit that communicates the whole idea of authority, submission, subordination, hierarchy, and children who are raised in such a place, and taught those things, understand. When they go outside their nuclear family and start their own family, and when they go out to interact with society, they understand. There's such a thing as some people who might be over me.

I might have to sacrifice my preferences once in a while to defer to somebody else who has more authority over me than I have. We lack that understanding, I think, in our society because the foundations have been destroyed, the family unit has been undermined. I mentioned as a third reason God's concern is for the institution of the family or the household is because the family is the primary means of transmission of godliness.

I say primary because it's not the only means. The church, through its evangelistic efforts to sinners, also promotes godliness. However, anyone who has tried to disciple adult converts envies those whose task it is to disciple children because adult converts, sincere as they may be, have a lot of baggage, and it's a long road to godliness from where they are.

Now, it may be a long road for the children, too, when they're born to godliness, but there's not so many things to undo. My wife and I have both run discipleship schools. Hers, the students, are the children of our family.

She's had four students. I've run discipleship schools mostly of other people's kids, grown up, many of whom didn't get saved until they were grown up. I envy my wife's job more.



Now, both have a sinful nature, the kids and the adults who get saved, but the adults who get saved not only have a sinful nature, it's been cultivated before God took over their life, whereas those who are converted at childhood, or at least influenced by godliness from childhood, have a foundation that's very different than that of an adult convert. Now, I'm not saying an adult convert can't get there. It's just he's got a lot further to go.

Someone said, you never really understand how far man fell until you start trying to make the journey back up again to where you fell from, and it's very hard. The more you cultivate, the more a person cultivates their sinful life before they got hold of by God, the harder it is to make the journey back up to godliness, to get rid of some of those patterns and stuff. Everyone knows this.

And so, even though certainly part of the way that God transmits godliness in society is through preaching the gospel to adults, and that would be especially true in frontier missions, where you go to a society where no one knows the Lord and the adults have to be reached first, yet once they've been reached, the perpetuation of godliness is most effectively and primarily carried on through godly parents training up godly offspring. It says in Malachi chapter 2 that God ordained marriage, and he made the husband and wife one flesh. He says, why did he make them one? Because he sought a godly offspring, he says.

When God made Adam and Eve and said, be fruitful and fill the earth, he didn't mean just be fruitful and fill the earth with sensate breathing people, but with godly offspring. You might remember Abraham's about the most important man in the Old Testament, at least the Jews think so, and I don't think they're wrong. I think that God's promises to Abraham become the basis for all the rest of the New Testament revelation.

But God, of course, gave special revelations to Abraham that he didn't give to anyone else of his generation, and he tells why. In Genesis 18, God's on his way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, but Abraham doesn't know it yet. God's just been enjoying a meal with Abraham in his home, and he says in Genesis 18, 17, the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? Then verse 19, for I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

God says, I'm going to let Abraham in on my secrets like I don't let other people in, because I know him. He's going to pass this on to his kids, and his kids' kids. This can be perpetuated.

You may have read in the book of Jeremiah how that Jeremiah was told by God to go to the Rechabites. The Rechabites were a clan that generally lived outside the city of

Jerusalem, but because the Babylonians had come to besiege the city, they had moved into the city walls, and Jeremiah was told by God to take the Rechabites into the temple, one of the rooms of the temple, and to offer them wine, and to tell them to drink some wine. Now, the average Jew would drink the wine without any problem, but the Rechabite says, no, we don't drink wine, because our ancestor Jehonadab, who happened to be 200 years earlier than Jeremiah's day, told us.

He didn't want us to drink wine. He didn't want us to plant vineyards. He didn't want us to live in the city, or buy houses, or whatever.

He wanted us to be more nomadic, and we just do what he said. 200 years later, what's that, 5, 10 generations later, this guy's household are still upholding his standards. Now, I'd really like to know what Jehonadab did.

He's a pretty effective father, and grandfather, and great-grandfather. If he can just teach us, show us, and between 5 and 10 generations later, 200 years, his offspring are still saying, well, our ancestor told us to do this, and that's what we do. And they were a credit to their ancestor.

They honored him, and the righteousness, and the standards that he perpetrated continued for generations, for centuries, after himself. Now, the Bible indicates that because God has great concern about the spiritual significance of households, and so forth, that there are ways in which he deals with households as households. Now, we know, of course, he also deals with individuals as individuals.

I don't think anyone doesn't understand that. I hope. I hope we all understand that God deals with us as individuals.

But it's important to note that he doesn't only deal with us as individuals. He deals with people as households, because that's the basic unit of the human race, is the family. And we find in the Bible both household blessings, that is, blessings that come on the whole family, because of one person, the head of household's righteousness.

And we find, on the other hand, household curses, where whole houses and families come under God's curse, where he's dealing with them not just as individuals, but as households. Over in 1 Samuel, for example, David is approaching Nabal, hoping to get some food for his men. He's on the run from Saul, and he's been somewhat protecting this man's livestock and servants from invaders and stuff.

So, he's going to ask a favor for him. But David's sending his messengers to Nabal's house to ask if the man might share some of his food with him. And in 1 Samuel 25, 6, it says, David said, Greet him in my name, and thus shall you say to him, that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.

Now, David told his servants to utter this blessing on the man and on his whole house. This is not a unique situation. In this case, it is something that is both in the Old and New Testament.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, we find in Ezekiel chapter 44, in verse 30, Ezekiel 44, 30, it says, And the first of all the firstfruits of all things, and every oblation of all, of every sort of your oblations, that means sacrifices, shall be the priests. You shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that doesn't mean money, but your bread dough, grain offerings too, that he may cause the blessing to rest on thine house. So, the head of the household brings his sacrifice on behalf of his family, and the priest receives it, and the priest then imparts the blessing, not just to the man, but to his house.

His whole house benefits. Noah's family is a very good example of how a whole house can benefit from one man's righteousness, because we're told in Genesis chapter 6, that Noah alone in the earth found grace in the sight of the Lord, and he was a righteous man in all his generation, he was the only one. His three sons are never said to have been righteous, but they were saved, and their wives, and Noah's wife, were all saved because the head of the household was saved.

And God saved his wife, and his children, and his children's wives in this case. Now, their later offspring weren't all righteous, and some of them came under God's judgment, but there is a whole household that was saved. It says in Hebrews chapter 11, that Noah moved with fear through faith, built an ark to the saving of his household.

And so, the whole household experienced blessing because of the one righteous man. In the teaching of Jesus, we have a confirmation of this reality, I think. If you compare especially Matthew 10 and Luke 10, in both places Jesus is sending out disciples, in Matthew 10 he's sending out the 12, in Luke 10 he's sending out the 70.

But it's rather interesting, if you look at Luke chapter 10, the instructions he gives them as he sends them out two by two to preach the gospel in cities. First of all, they're not supposed to stay in motels, they're supposed to stay in homes. They're supposed to find the home of a worthy individual and stay in that home with them.

But it says in Luke 10, 5 and 6, he says, "...and into whatsoever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house." And he says, "...and if a son of peace be there." That means the head of the household, if he's a man worthy of this blessing, "...your peace shall rest upon it that is on the house." The whole house will experience peace because a son of peace is the head of that household. It says, if there is no son of peace there, well, then your peace will return to you again. It won't rest on the house.

The blessing of that whole house depends on whether the husband, the head of the household, is a son of peace or not. In Matthew 10, we have a parallel to it, somewhat. And Jesus, again, gives him similar instructions.

But in verse 12 and 13 of Matthew 10, he says, "...and when you come into a house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you." Similar statement, obviously the same concept.

The difference is that in Luke, it says, "...if a son of peace is there." Meaning, it's referring to the head of the household. Here, it speaks of it as a worthy household or an unworthy household. The worthiness or unworthiness of the household had to do with the worthiness or the unworthiness of the head of the household.

And the blessing of peace would come on the household if the head of the household was worthy. His whole house would be considered worthy and would experience the blessing of that peace. Now, the same is true of curses, in some cases, in the Bible.

Most are familiar, at least, with Exodus 20, I imagine. Where God, in giving His instructions, He's given the Ten Commandments. And when He gives His instructions against making graven images and worshiping idols, He says this in verse 5. He says, "...thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.

For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me." Now, this is a household judgment. God visits the iniquity of the father. Now, the father is the one who commits the iniquity.

But God visits that iniquity of the father on the children to the third and fourth generation. Now, this has been greatly misunderstood at times, I think. This verse has been used to suggest a number of things that I'm not sure it's intending to say.

There are people who talk about generational bondages and generational sins and things like that. A lot of people have taught from this verse that if the father had a certain sin in his life, that his children and grandchildren and so forth would have that sin dominant in their life too. That, I think, is missing and misunderstanding the Hebraic expression to visit the iniquity.

Visiting the iniquity doesn't mean that God reproduces that iniquity in another generation. Visitation reproduces it again in another generation that the iniquity is itself repeated. But rather, the visitation of God is the judgment of God on the iniquity.

It's the judgment of God on that iniquity that is affecting several generations. It's not so much that a man who is a drunkard is going to have sons and grandsons, great-grandsons who are drunkards. He might, but that's not necessarily what it's saying.

What it is saying is a man who bows down to idols is going to make God angry and bring a visitation of judgment on that man. And that visitation is going to be protracted for generations. His whole children and grandchildren and maybe another generation may be affected by that judgment.

We have an example of God actually carrying that out on the whole nation of Israel. Because the nation of Israel went into captivity in Babylon because they committed idolatry. And three or four generations of Israelites were born in that captivity and lived as captives because of their parents' activities.

Now, the individual Jews in that situation could be saved. There were individual Jews in that captivity who were okay with God. They were righteous people.

They were men of faith like Daniel and Ezekiel. But that doesn't change the fact they lived under the consequences of their ancestors' sins. And so, the wickedness of a man may bring a judgment of sorts on his family.

Now, let me clarify. This does not mean that if a man is going to hell, that his children and grandchildren are going to hell too. The Bible makes that very clear.

In Ezekiel chapter 18, God in fact reproves the Jews for thinking that. They had this saying among themselves, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. This proverb was spoken among the Jews at the time when the Babylonians were coming against them.

And they were basically saying, this is happening to us because our fathers did these things wrong. It's like our fathers ate the sour grapes and we're the ones wincing. And Jeremiah quotes that proverb and Ezekiel quotes it.

In Ezekiel 18, God says, listen, stop using that proverb that the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. That's not the case. He says, basically what he's going to say is, the reason you're wincing is because you ate sour grapes too.

Your fathers may have done it, but so did you. And because of your own sins, you're going to die. It says, the soul that sins, it will die.

He says, a son will not die for his father's sins, and a father will not die for his son's sins. What he's saying is this, even though my father's actions may bring unpleasant temporal consequences on me, it's not that my personal relationship with God is going to have to be determined by what my ancestors did. A wicked man can have a son who is a godly man.

In fact, that same chapter says so. It says, if a man does wickedly in the sight of God, but his son sees his father's wickedness and turns from that, and does godliness, then he will live. But he might have to live in Babylon.

He'll have a relationship with God. He'll be a saved individual, but he'll still be living under consequences that were brought on by his father's sins in many cases. That's what I believe it means that God visits the iniquity.

That is, the judgment for certain sins is experienced not only in the generation where those sins were committed, but can be experienced by many generations of offspring. Not that God doesn't allow those offspring to have a relationship with Him, but that their temporal circumstances reflect the fact that their ancestors brought judgment on their society or on their household. David was told that because of his sin with Bathsheba, God said, the sword will never depart from your house all the days of your life.

Now, David's sons, Absalom, Amnon, Adonijah, they experienced violent deaths. And they were suffering in some respects the consequences of their father's sin. Any one of them could have been saved.

Solomon, for example, was in that household, and we presume that he knew the Lord, at least in his early years. He still lived under that family curse. He lived in a violent family.

The sword did not depart from that household, even in Solomon's youthful life, but Solomon was able to get a relation with God. But the family was still under a curse. There is such a thing as family curses.

In a number of other places, I don't want to turn to all of them, but look over at Deuteronomy chapter 7. This doesn't specifically mention a family curse, but it may indicate how a family curse may come upon a household. Deuteronomy 7, 26, God said, Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it, but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed thing. Bringing something that God finds abominable into your house is forbidden.

Why? Why doesn't He forbid you to go into the porno shop? Well, I mean, in a sense, other things in the Bible would forbid us from doing so, but bringing the porno home is specifically mentioned as forbidden. I don't think you should view porno anywhere, but the fact is bringing it home brings, I believe, the anger of God on the household. Now, I may be reading more in there than I should, but in 2 John, we have another expression of a similar concept.

2 John only has one chapter, but in verses 10 and 11, John says, If there come any unto you that bring not this doctrine, that is the doctrine of Christ that he mentions in the previous verse, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God's speed, for he that bid him God's speed is a partaker of his evil deeds. Like bringing something abominable into your house. Maybe a TV might qualify.

I don't know, but there are certainly things that are abominable inside of God that don't belong in a Christian's house. I'm not sure a TV is one of them, because not everything on it is abomination. Just about 99%.

But bringing a person into the house who is a perpetrator of a false gospel, that makes you a partaker with him. Now, it doesn't just address you conversing with such a person

out in the street. It says don't let them come into your house.

You need to protect your house from the invasion of those things that are an abomination to God. You need to keep God's blessing on your house. A lot of men who are Christians allow themselves to indulge in certain compromises because they assume, well, you know, if I have to suffer consequences, I can take that, hoping for minor consequences of their actions.

But they don't realize that as God views their household, their household may experience tremendous problems because of it. Because God treats the household in some respects as a solidarity. God views culture as made up or society as made up of families and deals with it in some ways as families.

Now, it's quite clear that God intends for His people, who are in covenant relationship with Him, to have covenant households. I don't agree entirely with the Reformed people about this. They take it a little further than I believe the Bible allows, but they're on the right track in some respects.

But if you look at Genesis chapter 17, when God told Abraham for the first time to circumcise himself, He was not to circumcise himself alone. But it says in Genesis 17, 12 and 13, And he that is eight days old, God's talking to Abraham, meaning your children who are eight days old, shall be circumcised among you. Every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

Now, this would include not only the children, but the servants in the household. There'd be household servants born there too. Servants were always considered part of the household in the Bible.

They're always treated as part of the family. They don't have the same privileges as other members of the family, but they're part of the household. And so Abraham's servants were blessed with him.

And they were also not so blessed when they had to be circumcised. But the fact is God dealt with the household. Whoever was there, this applied to.

Anyone born in your house has to be circumcised on the eighth day. He that is born in thy house, He says it again in verse 13, And he that is bought with money must needs be circumcised. And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

That is the circumcision is the mark of being in covenant with God. Now, God had a particular covenant with Abraham and his seed, especially Isaac. But all the household had to bear that mark of covenantal commitment to God.

Not all of them lived up to it, but they all were, as it were, devoted to it by God, by

Abraham, by the head of the household. Now, it was up to them as individuals. Ishmael, for example, or Midian, some of the other offspring of Abraham, they didn't live up to that commitment.

They were circumcised. Abraham consecrated them to God. And they had the mark of the covenant on them.

They were a covenant household, but it's still up to the individual to really live up to that. Now, I said the Reformed tradition takes us a little further than I would because Reformed churches, and by the way, Catholic churches too, apply this to infant baptism. And they argue that just as the Jews gave their infants the mark of covenantal family involvement by circumcision, so Christians in the new covenant give their children baptism as a mark of being in the covenant family.

Sounds good. I mean, it sounds right. They just say, well, baptism in the New Testament is the counterpart of circumcision in the Old Testament.

And as the Jewish fathers were entitled to include their whole families in the covenant by circumcision, so Christian fathers are entitled to include their whole families in the covenant by baptism. That's the whole argument for infant baptism. And of course, this is all based on the fact that a godly man's family is to be a covenant family.

They're to be included under the umbrella of that covenant that the husband has or that the man has with God. There is certainly a truth underlying that. I think the application is skewed only because I think it is a mistake to say that baptism in the New Testament is the counterpart of circumcision in the Old Testament.

There's nothing in the Bible that says that. There's one place in the Bible that baptism and circumcision are mentioned in the same verse in Colossians 2.11, but it doesn't say there that circumcision is the counterpart of baptism or vice versa. The Bible does indicate that there is a New Testament counterpart of circumcision and that is circumcision of the heart.

It's not baptism. Baptism is something else. And I do believe that all those who are in covenant with God in the New Testament have the circumcision of the heart and many of them also have baptism, but baptism isn't the counterpart of circumcision.

The heart circumcision is. Paul said in Romans 2.28 and 29, he said, He is not a Jew who has gone outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward and of the flesh, but he is a Jew who has gone inwardly, and that is circumcision which is inward in the heart. Paul said to the non-circumcised Philippians who were Gentiles, he says, We are the true circumcision who worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

It's a spiritual thing. So, I don't agree that because the Jews circumcised their kids, we



should baptize our infants, but I do believe that there is something that is truly taught, that God desires that the man of the household not only be in the household of God Himself, but that his whole household is. Now, the New Testament adds something of a dimension to this that we don't find in the Old Testament, and that is the separation of families at times in obedience to Christ.

This is not necessarily the desired thing, but Jesus predicted that it would happen because of disobedience on the part of some members of the family, and that the actual identity of the Christian is more related to Christ than to his biological parents. We see Jesus saying this in Matthew chapter 10, verses 32 and following. Matthew 10, 32.

Jesus said, Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven, think not that I am come to send peace on the earth, I came not to send peace but a sword. The word sword there means division.

In Luke's parallel it says, I didn't come to send peace but division. It's not talking about war or anything like that. It's talking about division within a family.

It says, For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. Now, Jesus is not saying this, and some kids may wish He was. He's not saying, You know, in the Old Testament times, people pretty much identified by who their parents were, and brothers and sisters in the nuclear family and so forth, and their extended family.

That was their identity. But I've come to break all that up. I've come that, you know, everybody's just going to be their own person, and sometimes even sons will be against their fathers, and daughters against their mothers and so forth.

That's just the way it's going to have to be. And that's normal and good. No, He's not saying that's normal and good.

What He's saying is, because there will be some members of a family, of a biological family, who will reject Christ, and some members who will accept Him, there will be a disparity there between them in terms of what matters to them. Some will be confessing. Some will be denying Him before men.

And that's going to be the defining issue. A Christian solidarity is with those who confess Christ. And sometimes that won't include all the family members.

But Jesus isn't presenting that as a desirable norm. It is more desirable that all the family members confess Christ. Certainly He admits that there will be times when the relationship to Christ preempts family loyalties.

And that because a member or two of the family are loyal to Christ, and other members are not, that there will be a sad, but inevitable, ripping apart of that normal solidarity of the family. But He's not saying that that is desirable. He's simply saying, that's what's going to happen.

And that we're going to have... Although He certainly doesn't try to dismantle the family, He says there is a higher loyalty that we have than just to our biological family, and that's to Christ. He even said that about His own biological family, Mary and His brothers. You remember how when they came and said to Jesus, Your mother and your brothers are here to see you.

Over in Mark chapter 3, and He answered in verse 33, saying, Who is My mother and who are My brethren? And He looked around about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold, My mother and My brethren. For whoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother and My sister and My mother. That is, My real family is made up of those who are along with Me submitted to My Father.

My Father is the real head of this family, and all My real brothers and sisters are those who are submitted to Him. They are My mother and My brother and sisters and so forth. But at the same time, Jesus honored His mother.

He honored His father. Even though it wasn't His real father. Joseph was just His adoptive father.

But we read in Luke chapter 2 near the close there, that Jesus at age 12, after He told them, I must be about My Father's business, meaning God, His Father, it says that He went down to Nazareth with them, and He was subject to them until He was 30 years old. He was subject to His parents. So, Jesus is not trying to say, I've got nothing to do with this nuclear biological family here.

He's just saying that when it comes down to loyalties, My loyalty to My Father and to those who are His children is really more fundamental and defining of who I am and where My solidarity is than to My biological relatives. In Luke chapter 9, it's very clear that there are times when obedience to Christ will cause a separation, even in a biological family. In Luke 9, 59-62, He said to another, follow Me.

But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Customary obligation of a son to wait for his father to die and give him a decent burial, then to go off and do something more independent perhaps. Jesus said to him, let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the Kingdom of God.

And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee, but let me first go and bid them farewell, which are at home in my house. Probably his parents, not his wife and children. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for

the Kingdom of God.

Now, here's cases where Jesus was calling a couple men to do things that their families might not really want them to do. But obedience to Jesus Christ, we're going to require that they do it anyway. And one wanted to go back and say goodbye to his family.

And Jesus, I suppose in this case, probably knew his family would try to dissuade him. And so he says, no, you just come along. You don't put your hand upon and look back.

The other guy wanted to bury his father, which is an expression that may simply mean, when my father dies, I need to be around to see him buried. His father may or may not have been dead at the time. But the point is, these people felt some kind of link to their families that was actually interfering with their obeying Jesus Christ.

And Jesus said, no, I can't do it that way. You're going to have to be loyal to me. You've got to let the dead bury the dead.

If that's what it takes, you follow me and preach the gospel. Now, not everyone is called to be an itinerant preacher, like these guys were being called to be. Not everybody has the same calling.

But everybody might find, especially if they come from an unconverted household, if their parents are not Christians, might find that obeying Jesus Christ in some area, whether it's the way you raise your kids or whether it's the way you conduct the finances of your home, you may find your parents don't agree with it. You may find that there is a division in the family because you're doing things God's way. And the unconverted in the family don't agree with it.

That's normal. The fact that God has made the society a society of families doesn't mean that there are not individual decisions to be made, which sometimes, because of the higher priority of obedience to God, might disrupt the family. However, the Bible makes it clear that every effort should be made that whole families should be saved.

Now, in most of the cases where families are broken up, it's almost always this. An offspring in the family gets saved, but the parents are not or the siblings are not. It's very rarely the case that the head of the household gets saved and the rest of the family stays unsaved.

In fact, I've known many cases where wives got saved, but their husbands didn't, ever. But I've known very few cases, almost none, where a husband got saved and his wife didn't get saved, if the marriage stayed together. Sometimes a man got saved and his wife left him.

But if the marriage stayed together, usually the wife came around and followed the head. That's usually how it is. Now, I'm not going to say it's always that way, but I think

that's fairly normative.

It seems to be implied in what Paul said to the Philippian jailer, which I'm sure most of you remember that conversation when Paul was asked by the Philippian jailer, what must I do to be saved? And Paul answered in Acts 16 and 31, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your household. Now, he was not saying that if you are saved, your household will necessarily be saved. There's some people who have understood this for us to teach, almost like guaranteed household salvation.

You know, if you get saved, you can just claim your husband and your kids or your kids and your wife or your parents. You can just... You know, one person who's saved in the household just guarantees that they'll infect the rest of the household with Christianity. That's not necessarily true or else Jesus wouldn't talk about, you know, a son being against the father and daughter against the mother and so forth.

It's not always the case. However, this was a head of a household. And you know what? Jesus said, get saved.

You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you should be saved. And the same applies to your family. Now, see, that's not everyone would realize.

A lot of people just assume the husband alone had the responsibility. It didn't matter what his family did. They just kind of go wherever he went and be whatever he was, whether they believed what he believed or not.

And Paul, I believe, is saying, listen, all people are saved the same way by believing the Lord Jesus Christ. That applies to you. It applies to your household.

As you read further down, you'll find that he and his whole family were baptized that night, which some people use as an argument for infant baptism or household baptism. But we find that all of his family believed that night. It says he rejoiced having believed with all his household.

The man got saved and he brought the evangelist home to talk to his wife and kids and they got saved. That was a quick family conversion. Sometimes it takes longer than that.

But the idea is that God's norm is that families as whole groups should be saved whenever possible. In other words, we don't just get saved and then leave our family behind and go after the world out there. A lot of missionaries, for example, put their kids in boarding school so that they can go out and reach the natives out in the jungle.

And the mentality seems to be these other people who are not biologically related to me are more important for me to reach than my own children. I neglect my children in order to reach these other people's children. That is simply wrongheadedness, I believe.

And it hasn't always borne good fruit. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7, something that's been confusing to many. Verse 14, he says, For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.

Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. Now, what's he talking about there? It's in the context of an unbelieving wife, or excuse me, a believing wife staying with or departing from an unbelieving husband and vice versa. He's advising that they not split up just because their spouse is not a Christian, but that they stay in the marriage because a believing wife can have a sanctifying influence upon her husband.

And a believing husband can have a sanctifying influence on his wife. And the presence of a Christian parent can have a sanctifying influence on the children. Now, some people actually go so far as to say that if there's a saved parent, then the whole family is saved.

They're all holy. They're all sanctified. But that's not what I understand what he's saying.

I believe what he's saying is a Christian in the home, rather than abandoning the home because it's an unsaved home, Christian in the home can have a sanctifying influence on the rest of the family. In fact, he says in verse 16, For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? In other words, it's not a given. You don't know.

Maybe you will. You might be able to do so. Stay there.

It'll help. If you leave, you won't be able to do so. The idea, though, is that getting the whole family saved is what is desirable.

And this generally means that parents who are already Christians bring up their children to be Christians. In Ephesians 6, Paul urges the fathers to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Obviously, the idea is to transmit Christianity through the family unit.

Now, we're obviously not going to get through much more tonight. We're almost out of time. But I do want to point out the way that the dominant culture of this part of the world that we live in and this time in history is making war on the family.

And we have to recognize that in many cases, the church has collaborated with the enemy. This is Satan's war against God. This is Satan's war against the institution of the family.

And it's being done through the institutions of our culture. One of the things that has made war against the family is industrialism or the Industrial Revolution and urbanization. These two are related to each other.

In the 18th century, the invention of the steam engine and other technological wonders

caused the creation of factories and mass production, and we call that the Industrial Revolution. Before that time, most people made their living in simple trades, usually agrarian farming type pursuits, maybe a little bit of buying and selling kind of stuff going on. But mass production was not something that was possible because there wasn't a machine for it.

There wasn't the technology for it. With the Industrial Revolution, the jobs were to be found in the factories. And so people moved to where the factories were and the population grew around these industrial centers and they became what we call cities.

Now, there were cities in ancient times, but the modern industrial city was an urban sprawl, really, basically, where more and more people seeking the convenience of an infrastructure the city provided and also seeking the easy money, really. A lot easier to go work at a factory and have someone pay you than to go out and farm and maybe have crop failure a few years in a row and maybe be trying to, you know, eke out a living as a dirt farmer. A lot of people are attracted to cities.

In fact, as you probably know, something like 95% of the population of the world now are urbanized. They're in the cities. And that being so, most people just assume that's kind of normal and natural.

And it's not a thing to be lamented. That's where the jobs are. That's where the fun is.

That's where the money is. That's where the people are. And all of those things should make us suspicious of it as if it's neutral.

When you get that many sinners together in one place, you've got an amplification of the sinful human condition. And every evil bird inhabits Babylon. Every wicked thing is found in abundance in every city.

Essentially, God didn't make a city. He made a garden. Now, some people say, especially those who are Reconstructionists say, well, you know, man's history starts in a garden and ends in a city, meaning the New Jerusalem.

True, but the New Jerusalem is not a normal city. It's made up only of godly people. The unrighteous aren't there.

It's a spiritual fellowship. It's the church. It's the body of Christ.

Yeah, I mean, that's a wonderful community. But that's not what we're talking about when we talk about Los Angeles and New York and Chicago or any other major city. This is not a concentration of the godly.

This is a concentration of the wicked. And I'm not saying Christians don't ever belong there. Because there are many Christians who have urban ministries.

They have, you know, they're drawn there for the glory of God. But my suspicion is that most Christians who live in cities are there for the same reasons the unbelievers are there. The money, the stimulation, the entertainment, and all those other things, none of which have very much to do with the glory of God and all have a very great potential to corrupt people.

And the Bible acknowledges this. In Isaiah chapter 5, as Isaiah is decrying many of the evils of his time and of his society, one of the things he says in verses 8 and 9, His woe to them that join house to house, that lay field to field till there's no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth. In mine ears said the Lord of hosts of a truth, many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair without inhabitant.

Now, what's he talking about, building house to house and not leaving any room for people to be alone? He's talking about urbanization. That's what he's talking about, early pre-industrial urbanization. But, you know, most people in those days lived out in the country.

They had farms. They might be outside the walls of a big city and they'd go into the city to do business once in a while. But, and they'd run in there when the enemies came, so they'd be, you know, behind the walls.

But their life was out, spread out, work in the ground and working, you know, in the sweat of their face like God said they would after the fall. Urbanization, industrialization, I'm not saying it's an unmitigated evil. I'm sure that it's in itself not as evil as some other things can be.

And I think for some people it's not evil at all. But it is positively a danger and it is definitely hard on families. The industrial revolution was very hard on families.

It led usually to the people who were relatively poor getting their wives and their children involved in the factories too. Eventually, everyone was simply away from home. And even in the families where the husband alone worked, he was away from home in ways that he wasn't back when he was tending the farm.

And it was very hard on families. Family solidarity began to erode, as all historians would note, with the industrial revolution. And, of course, we live in a time where it's a major problem.

Now, in the notes there, I put Luke 21, verses 20 through 21. This is, of course, a specialized case, but I think it might have broader application. Jesus said, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation is near.

Then you who are in Judea flee to the mountains. And don't take with you your stuff from the city. In another place, in Luke 17, Jesus said, when he was talking about the same thing, fleeing to the mountains, he said, remember Lot's wife.

What is there to remember about her? Well, we know almost nothing about her, but we know one thing about her. God called her to leave the city, and she physically left the city, but the city never left her. It's easy to get her out of the city, but it's not easy to get the city out of the woman, or out of the man, or out of the children.

Lot had at least four children. Two of them got out of Sodom. The other stayed with their husbands.

Lot took his family into Sodom, but he couldn't get them out again. He lost his wife and at least half of his children to Sodom. Now, he was a righteous man living in that city.

It says in the New Testament, it says, that righteous Lot, he vexed his righteous soul day by day with the unlawful deeds of that city, as he saw and heard what they were doing. Just like most Christians in the big city, probably. They vex their souls, but they're strong.

They're strong, at least they're sure they are. They don't know to what degree they may be in compromise, but they don't see any major issues in their lives that make them think the city is a bad place for them. But a great number of them lose their kids, because kids aren't always as strong as their parents.

And living in the city has been very hard on families. For one thing, there's no privacy. In a city, there is a corporate communal concern for the children.

It takes a village, remember, to raise a child. And when that village is all concentrated together, it's hard to keep the village's hands off of those kids, because the village wants to own them. We have a friend in Oregon who had a baby a couple years ago, I guess, or a year ago, and she had a baby at home.

She never notified the state or anything that the baby had been born, but somehow some social worker showed up her door and said, we heard you had a baby, and we want to give you some information on how to take care of your baby and so forth. And she said, I'm OK. I'm taking care of the baby just fine.

Thanks, don't need your help. And they kept pushing and pushing. They said, well, at least let's leave these materials with you.

And there was a brochure they gave that said, the title was Oregon's Children, Everyone's Concern. Well, that's the way the city thinks. You know why? Because if your kids don't turn out good, they become part of the gang, and that is everyone's concern.

So the state, the city begins to feel they have some vested interest in the way your children are raised. If you're not raising them along the mainstream ways, they may just have to send a social service person to come and take your kid and give them to a family that will raise them along the conventional ways. This is happening.



This is one of the results of people giving up the privacy and the solidarity of their family and the ability to raise their family on their own and going into the cities where their children are everybody's concern. So much so that you don't even educate your children there anymore. You just send them to the state schools.

The city basically replaces the family with the village. And this is pretty much what the Bible warns against in some ways. Stateism, I mentioned, is part of the problem.

Stateism, of course, is like communism or Nazism, where the state basically becomes the god of everybody and owns everybody. And the state takes care of everybody. Friedrich Engels, who was the collaborator with Karl Marx on the Communist Manifesto and on Das Kapital, he made this statement, which I put in your notes.

He said, the family, as that term is presently understood, must go. Why? Because the family is a tremendous bulwark against stateism. And the state wants to be the new nanny, the new family, the new owner of the children, the new owner of the parents, the new standard setter, the new economic arbiter.

The state wants to take the place of the family. And it's interesting because God sort of warned the Jews when they sought a king that such a thing would kind of happen to their family. When they came to Samuel and said, give us a king, Samuel was bugged by it, and so was God.

But God said, give them a king, but tell them what they're going to have to face. And what they were going to face was going to be negative impact on their families, having a tyrant, having a monarch, which God never intended for them to have. It's early stateism in Israel.

In 1 Samuel 8, I forgot to mention 8 in the notes, put that in there, verses 10 through 18. Notice God said this to them. He said, this will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.

He shall take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, for his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, etc., etc. Then down verse 13, and he will take your daughters to be confectionaries and to be cooks and to be bakers, get them out of the way, and to be cooks and to be bakers.

And he will take your fields and your vineyards and your olive yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he'll take the tenth of your seed, etc., etc. Verse 16, he'll take your men's servants, traditionally part of your household, and your maid's servants, and your godliest young men, or goodliest, excuse me, young men, and your asses and put them into his work.

In other words, he'll take your family out of the household work and put it into state

work, government work. And that's, of course, what... Well, look at our society. We have more government workers, more federal employees, and so forth, than probably any other kind of industry, I imagine, in the world.

As statism takes over, it replaces the family and destroys the family. It's Satan's war on the family.