

VI. Parenting in Biblical Perspective
Biblical Parenting Illustrated in the Lives of Joseph and Mary
“The Indispensable Foundation of Biblical Parenting”

Luke 2

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March 9, 2014 – Evening Sermon

We will be looking at some selected verses from Matthew 1 and Luke 2 in this study. Let's start with Matthew 1:18-21 which says *[18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. [19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. [20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*

Now let's look at Luke 2. We have this birth of Christ and then some verses around the parenting of Mary and Joseph from Jesus' adolescence and up to His manhood. Luke 2:39-42, 51-52 says *[39] And when they (Mary and Joseph) had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. [40] And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. [41] Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. [42] And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.*

[51] And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. [52] And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Prayer:

Father, do bless us as we come to this Your Word in this series on parenting, illustrated from the lives of Joseph and Mary. Give us both insight and wisdom for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

We have been looking at the Biblical principles of parenting through Mary and Joseph yet granted there is only a small amount of Scripture about the parenting of Jesus but it's worthwhile to see how these principles are illustrated and what the Scripture does take time to illustrate to us from their lives about parenting. The first thing we did was to define the Biblical definition of a family. The family Biblically defined is to consist of one man and one woman united in the covenant of marriage with parental responsibility of all of their children, whether these children are in their home by reproduction, biologically through the blessing of their union or adopted or foster children. What if I'm divorced or widowed or a single parent? I will get to things about you and your situation but we are to teach what that Biblical definition is from creation and then address what happens in a Genesis 3 world but from the Genesis 1 and 2 world this is what God established for the family.

Now let's move to the essential practice of Biblical parenting. From the life of Mary and Joseph here is something that we see very quickly. They know what to do. On the eighth day they knew what to do with Jesus in terms of circumcision. On the 40th day they knew what to do in terms of Mary's purification and Jesus' presentation at the temple. When Jesus was twelve years old they knew what to do and it says they came to the temple every year. They came on a

regular basis for the three celebrations at the temple. We are also told it was their regular habit to be in the synagogue at Nazareth.

So here is a basic essential practice of Biblical parenting. One if it is referred to is usually done apologetically but it's an actual essential practice and that's effective Biblical parenting is only achievable with Christian parents who insistently bring the church to their home by intentionally bringing their home to the church. The church is God's family for you, and the home is your family for the church. Mary and Joseph were no strangers to the pre-New Testament church meeting in the temple and meeting in the synagogue in their home. It was their regular custom, it was their regular life. It was built into the habit of their life, their family and their parenting. They didn't do drive-by church. They were engaged in the life of the church as parents and they had their children engaged as well, Jesus and His siblings. So that is an essential practice that is to be embraced in the life of Biblical parenting where you unite your home to the church and then you unite the church into your home as you set up family worship, talk about the things of the Lord and what it means to be a part of the body of Christ with your family. This is where the family of God is brought into your home as well so that the two are intersecting in the life of your parenting.

What is Biblical parenting? Biblical parenting is a commitment by Christian parents to bring their covenant children to a saving relationship in Christ by using all the means available in God's church to raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. What is your objective? You want to evangelize your child and then disciple your child by bringing what you are learning in the church into your home, bringing your home into the church and as you are doing that you are focusing your children upon Christ. You are using the means that God has appointed within His church with intentional Gospel evangelism and discipleship.

This study is our sixth study and we took two studies to look at fatherhood and motherhood through Joseph and Mary. We looked at fatherhood through Joseph as a man of God, a husband and a father and how he guided and guarded his family with all expense necessary. Then we looked at Mary and her motherhood of how she was a nurturer within the family of what she did in concert with her husband in terms of Biblical motherhood. In this study I'd like to give you what I believe is the absolutely indispensable foundation for Biblical parenting. I am using some pretty bold terms like the 'essential practice,' the 'indispensable foundation' and then I want to address how you deal with these principles that I will be giving in a broken world but I want to put before us what the Bible teaches in this area.

Biblical parenting is most enhanced by a father and mother who prioritize and develop their marital unity and intimacy in Christ. Some of you very practically know how important that is, don't you? It is because you were the victims of children who knew how to separate you. I was a master at it. "Mother, if daddy says it's alright for me to go out tonight, is it alright with you?" I made sure she was in a room by herself and then I would find my dad. Then I would say "Dad, mom said I could go out tonight if it's okay with you." I learned that not's really the way it unfolded but if I could maybe get them separated I could maybe get what I wanted done. That little ploy is really a revelatory fact that effective parenting is best done when there is a deep, true, marital unity and intimacy. I could put it this way. Children are not the reason for your unity, they are the result of your unity and they are best cared for when you maintain your unity with intimacy.

You can't parent if you play drive-by church. The National Religious survey has already documented that we're in a phenomena where our young people are leaving the church. Most of us think it's the churches fault. Actually it's not, it's parenting. When children grow up they

merely do what they learned from their parents and that was the secondary at best, nature of the church. So they will claim to be Christian but have no time for the church, why? It is because they learned it from their parents. Parenting works. They actually did a study of those who were engaged in the church after they left their college years and had begun their careers and there were two things that contributed to them staying in church. One is that their parents were engaged in the life of the church and they returned as children and most didn't leave it while they were in college. The second thing was their dads/fathers led the way.

This last week I listened to a Jewish lady who is a religious editor for one of the New York papers. She had done her study and this was her report of evangelical Christianity. She didn't give this as a study analysis, she just gave this as a matter of a fact of observation that came from her study on another issue. She said it is very clear that evangelical Christianity is a female driven enterprise. Ladies, you need to know that there is nobody that loves female leadership in the church more than me and I'm grateful to tell you that were striving to make sure that women with leadership gifts are on every team except for maybe the church discipline team throughout this congregation. I will tell you that once any church is characterized by female leadership it will be dead in a generation or two. That is her evaluation. This lady had no axe to grind. In fact, if anything she would have probably applauded that but that was her analysis.

How do we get to the point that we have parenting that's effective? I believe the effectiveness of fathers and mothers begin with the unity and intimacy of a husband and wife, not just in the producing of the child but in the raising of the child. This is what God has called us to embrace. In other words, we actually prioritize our marital unity and intimacy in Christ. How many families strain after the children leave the home? The reason why is the whole relationship between the husband and wife was utterly abandoned and given no attention as everybody just did parenting. Then when the children left the home they looked to each other and said "Our whole reason for being together is gone." They have already started calling each other 'mommy' and 'daddy.' We have lost all those terms of endearment, those intimate moments and all those things because we did not prioritize it.

What is it that you see in Mary and Joseph here? It is just hinted at but you see it clearly. As much as Joseph is about to deal with the issue of having a Son and all of that, his first thought is Biblically, 'what do I do if my betrothed has become unfaithful and we have not yet consummated this marriage?' I have a responsibility to divorce her but I love her so I refuse to do it to expose her. I'll do it in whatever way I can to be faithful to God's Word but to take care of her. That commitment to her would lead him to take care of her in Bethlehem, to take her away from the threats of Herod into Egypt, to bring her back to Judea and then to escape the threats of Herod's son he would take her up to Nazareth. He would take care of her. He knew how to guide her. He loved her and they had a unity and an intimacy together so Jesus is nurtured.

The whole thing we'll start in the next study is that He grew in wisdom in which we'll spend a whole study on that. We'll see how He grew in stature and spend a whole study on that. We will spend a study on how to raise our children in the favor of God and a study on how to raise them in the favor of men. The reason it says twice that Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and favor with God from His adolescence up to His manhood, is because Jesus was not only taught in the church for we see Him sitting there asking questions of His teachers in the church but He was also taught in His home. Jesus was truly a Man who was born as a baby and as a boy and had to be trained up in wisdom, stature, favor with God and favor with man. How? It was through the God-ordained means of parenting. How? It was between parents who were together. He was

submissive to them. They had this intimacy and unity, engaged in the raising of Jesus and then His siblings.

I'd like to take this whole principle and break it down for you with just a couple of takeaways about effective Biblical parenting that observes this prioritization of marital unity. Before you look at parental practice you prioritize your marital unity and intimacy. How does that take place? How can we be Biblically effective parents? We do that through prioritizing our marital intimacy and unity. Here are three takeaways regarding that.

The first one is that means your marriage is in the Lord. Effective Biblical parenting calls for parents who each have a personal and robust Gospel saturated relationship with Christ yet are intentionally encouraging one another in the Lord. Each personally, has a relationship with Christ. They are in the Lord. They are pursuing the Lord. The Lord is in them. They have their time with the Lord. They have their time in God's Word. They have their time in prayer but it is always with an eye toward the one with whom I am one. So that it's not just me off growing in Jesus apart from my spouse. It is always this pursuit of my own robust Gospel-saturated relationship with Christ utterly devoted to be spilling it over and encouraging my wife and/or husband, whichever the case may be. You are intentionally making sure that you're not only walking with the Lord, pursuing the Lord but you are encouraging your spouse in that same direction. That marriage is in the Lord. You are growing personally and together in the Lord.

I would like to share with you best practices, at least in my home, that have been helpful and by no means have these been consistently done throughout our marriage life but overall they have helped us. One is to sit down and make sure we talk with each other each evening to ask what is happening and what did you learn today. What is God's Word showing you? Secondly, is to read Scripture and pray with each other every morning before the day moves ahead, having first spent time with the Lord yourself, but not just your quiet time but a quiet time that leads to a time of prayer with each other where you are engaged in each other's life. Then you have the whole dynamic, practice and opportunity to just be aware of each other. It may be something as practical as a date night once a week where you can talk with each other about the things of the Lord and what's going on in your lives. You prioritize your relationship with Christ and then you prioritize an intentional spilling of that relationship into the life of one another.

Let's look at I Peter. Here is another little help in this area straight from the lips of the Apostle Peter who was at least married for some time because we know they used to meet in his mother-in-law's house. If he had a mother-in-law it meant he had a wife. Here is a man who speaks not only Holy Spirit inspired but life worn. I Peter 3:1-6 says *[1] Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct. [3] Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—[4] but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. [5] For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, [6] as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.*

Some of you women might think that you're husband isn't like Abraham, well praise the Lord. How would you like to have a guy who looked out for his skin so much that two times he lied about you being his wife yet she kept her eyes on the Lord and was an instrument in the life of her husband and so the Lord took him up short as we used to say growing up and taught him a lesson two times on that one. So here is this woman who has this vital relationship with the Lord

that spills over into the life of her husband even when he is falling short with this stable, secure and Godly testimony that affects his life and encourages him forward in the Lord.

What about men? I Peter 3:7 says [7] *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.* In other words he is pointing out two things to you. By virtue of creation she is the weaker vessel. God has made us differently biologically in terms of our makeup. There is a difference between men and women but then in terms of redemption she is your fellow heir in the grace of life. By virtue of creation God has you there to protect her. By virtue of redemption the same blood that saved you saved her. The same Holy Spirit that is in you is in her. The same One that gifted you has gifted her. So you are joint heirs in Jesus Christ. So what do you do? You live with your wife in an understanding way. Understand your calling by virtue of creation to wrap her up, encourage her, protect her and provide for her. Understand your calling in redemption as a joint heir in the grace of life to serve the Lord yoked together in Jesus Christ so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Don't get mad at me. You know it's coming. Just a little bit ago I said wouldn't it be great to pray with your wives every morning but you can't. Can I tell you why? It is because of the way we are treating them during the day or the night. Our very act of praying many times is hindered because of the way we view them and relate to them. I'm sure there are some exceptions but our prayer life for and with our wives many times are hindered because we don't live with them in an understanding way. So we are to have this robust relationship that spills over into each other's lives.

Here is the second takeaway. Effective Biblical parenting happens when parents embrace their Biblically revealed complimentary roles – marital roles, responsibilities and relationships in Christ. Let's look at Ephesians 5. We are to embrace our Biblical role in life. Here is it laid out for us with clarity. Ephesians 5:21-33 says (here is the unity verse) [21] *submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.* (What does that look like in the marriage?) [22] *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* (It is an act of worship.) [23] *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* [24] *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

[25] *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* [26] *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* [27] *so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* [28] *In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* [29] *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,* [30] *because we are members of his body.* [31] *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* (Quote from Genesis 2:24) [32] *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* [33] *However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

It is intimacy and unity. It's not a partnership. It is a oneness in the Lord. One plus one equals one. So what is God's goal for you and your unity and intimacy? It is one plus one equals one and to get there you have to leave. If you don't leave you have one plus one equals six and that won't work but once you've left then you have a cleft. That means you have to cleave and when you cleave you cleave together. It's not the wife goes over to the husband or

the husband goes over to the wife or the husband and the wife meet in the middle. It is the husband and the wife have died to themselves and they meet as one in Christ.

Now the husband has this role that God has given to him, to sacrificially love his wife, to be a servant leader in her life, to wash her with the water of the Word, to lead her, to guide her and to minister to her in her life. God has called him to image Christ's relationship to His bride and Jesus says to His bride, "nothing can separate Me from loving you." Hold fast with God's Word. Hold fast with servant leadership. Hold fast with sacrificial love.

Then the wife becomes the completer – the helper/completer and the helper/encourager as she submits and comes alongside her husband. The picture is already there in the first marriage. Here is Adam and here is Eve. Where does Eve come from? She comes from his side to fit alongside of him. Only one time in the creation does it say that something was not good for every time that God created it was good until He made man, male and then He said "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make for him a corresponding helpmate." So from the side of Adam comes Eve and then Eve fits right into Adam so she doesn't come from his head where she is over him and she doesn't come from his feet where she is under him but from his side.

What about the bride of Christ in the second Adam? Where did we come from? We came from the riven side of Christ where the blood flowed to purchase us. So we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ who has saved us. Then the woman is given that glorious name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus said "I must go away and when I go away I will send to you the other Helper." A name for Jesus is the Helper. A name for the Holy Spirit is the Helper. A name for the wife is the helper/completer, the helper/encourager as she respects and comes alongside of her husband. As we embrace these roles then we begin to work our way through them.

At some point I will tell you the three problems in embracing these roles but I just give them to you briefly. Here is where Satan gets in on breaking your marital intimacy and unity. One, he breaks it through the tensions of bad financial decisions – the lack of Christian stewardship. Number two, he breaks it through ungodly communication. Number three he breaks it through a worldly view of sexuality instead of the good and glorious gift and practice. Those are the things that Satan would use to break this as he would attempt to get our minds fashioned around another world and life view to the destruction of our children.

Here is what I am saying. You cannot parent your children until you embrace your roles, not profitably. Now can God over rule us? Yes. Can God clean up our mess? Yes, but we will not be a profitable asset in the lives of our children to the extent that we neglect developing our roles and relationships with each other as husband and wife. That is what positions us to be effective parents with intimacy and unity.

Thirdly and finally, this is just a little bit of pastoral counseling in these areas. I'll come back to that matter of intimacy, sexuality, redemptive communication and finances. Perhaps you're reading this and you're single and you're thinking "How does this apply to me?" First of all to whatever degree God has given you Godly fathers and mothers, thank them. Don't just walk away from them but thank them. Where they failed you, forgive them, but where do you go? Unless the Lord has gifted you for celibacy you're probably looking at the matter of marriage. So what kind of marriage do you want?

It is not a marriage to have kids. It's a marriage in the Lord. Children are a blessing. They are not the objective. It is what Paul says, it's a marriage in the Lord. Number one you want to marry someone who is a clear believer in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. There are no questions on this. It is not 'hope to.' So we can certainly forget evangelistic dating and

evangelistic marrying. Does God overrule from time to time? Absolutely and that's just God's sovereign kindness but that is not the pattern.

Let me take it a step further. It's not just 'oh my goodness he is a communicate member of Briarwood church so we can get married.' You want to find out where he is. You want to find out where he wants you to be. You want to find out where she is. You want to find out where she wants you to be in the Lord. You want to find out if both of you are called together in the Lord to serve the Lord. Will we push each other forward in serving the Lord together? You must reject the Hollywood definitions of marriage which are built around romanticism which is purely defined in terms of sexual attraction. You have to reject that. It has only been the last two or three generations that have absolutely sold out the whole notion of marriage based upon physical attraction. That doesn't mean we don't appreciate the beauty of our wife or that God has not called us into this sexual relationship together but there is something much more meaningful that will last when those days are gone and it is something that grows much deeper in terms of a personal commitment to each other as the years advance in life.

Singles you say 'no' to the idolatry that your life is dependent upon marriage. You say 'no' to the fact that your salvation is in a husband or a wife or in marriage. You say 'yes' to submitting to pursuing this and then asking God to bring the marriage that is in the Lord and the Lord is enough to strengthen you for that day.

You may say "What if I'm a single parent?" There is so much I can say to you but I'll say this briefly. That is why it is so important to be a vital member of the body of Christ so that Godly grandfathers and Godly fathers in the faith can be there to help you with your children. Godly grandmothers and Godly mothers can help you to be there for your children. One word of warning here and that is it is best accomplished as a single parent through the ministries of the church primarily not the individuals lest you get inappropriately fastened to someone personally. So I would reach out to that trail life. I would reach out to that youth ministry. I would reach out to that children's ministry. I would reach out to that men's ministry or women's ministry and all those ministries are thinking about how they can come alongside of single parents in this church to be of an assistance to them because something is missing in that home.

Then we are upholding one another in prayer. The children's ministry and youth ministry are constantly thinking of that and we're striving to build this one man/one woman, husband/wife, parents but it's not there for we're in a Genesis 3 world. So how can we step in as ministries of the church? It is through people and then we begin to supply things so that the body of Christ is working together in and for the Lord.

Here is what can happen. When you and I in the Lord focus upon our marital intimacy and unity and we don't make idolatry of our children nor idolatry of our marriage but we love the Lord, embrace the roles and responsibilities, growing in grace, embedded in the body of Christ and we're spurring our spouse onto greater things, now we're free to look to our children and aim at their heart, not just their life. If you aim at their life you'll risk raising a Pharisee. You want to aim at their heart and the best way to aim at their heart is from a vital, intimate, marital unity. If you're a single parent then it's a vital, intimate relationship with the body of Christ where you're getting as much help as you can in the Lord. Then my child will begin to be the beneficiary of the clarity of a reconciling Gospel of men and women to God that is already seen in a marriage. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Father for the privilege to consider these matters in terms of our own parenting and Lord build us up in the faith. Father, we need strong families and that means we need strong marriages. That means we need a strong church and that means we need strong relationships. That means we need the Holy Spirit who will fix our hearts and minds upon Jesus and will gloriously be at work in and through us for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.