

## RCF Academy

### The Bible and a Just Society:

### Ancient Truths and Modern Applications

#### Topic 2:

#### The Dignity of Man and The Just Society (Part 1)

- I. Who is man and how is he supposed to live?
  - a. Man is a dichotomous creature
    - i. God's highest creation
      1. His image bearer – *Imago Dei*
      2. Loved enough to redeem at great cost
    - ii. In form and substance and character
      1. Closer to the ant than to God
      2. Closer to Hitler than God
  - b. When left to our own devices we develop a might makes right society
    - i. Force and coercion with the strong and ruthless getting on top and elevating themselves often at the expense of others
      1. Examples:
        - a. **Genesis 4:17** and following Cain – a murderer goes on to start a kingdom
        - b. Nimrod (Marduk-> Allah) - **Genesis 10:8-12**. Tower of Babel
        - c. Most of human history
          - i. Dictators
          - ii. Oppressors
          - iii. Ideologies of oppression
            1. Communism
            2. Fascism
            3. Racism
            4. Slavery
            5. Wars and invasions
            6. Etc.
      2. All throughout history conquest and enslavement have been man's mode of operation – it all started pretty much at day one and stems in part from some people elevating themselves in whatever way they can over others
    - ii. It starts with viewing some people as greater or lesser
      1. Society is full of
        - a. Classes
        - b. Castes

- c. Untouchables
- 2. Long history – **Read Amos 5:10-12**
- 3. People tend to view others as means to self-serving ends
  - a. Gives rise to all sorts of exploitations
  - b. Abuses
  - c. Starts with the individual – an oppressive government stems from oppressive people

II. God's social order is different

- a. Every individual bearers God's image and for that fact alone is worthy of respect and dignity
- b. God has established institutions and given commands that reflect this - we of course have corrupted them
- c. The first one is marriage and the family
  - i. We know how vital it is and its reflection of Christ and His church but let us review and look at it from a different angle
  - ii. Marriage
    - 1. Marriage, as defined by the Bible as one man and one woman (**Mt. 19:4-6**) and the resulting family is the fundamental building block for society
      - a. **Q: What purposes does the family serve?**
        - i. It is the first community we belong to
        - ii. It is the first civilizing institution (Gen 1-6, Deut 6)
          - 1. Children are barbarians that must be civilized
          - 2. All government starts with self-government and then moves to family government
          - 3. Punishment/Consequences for bad behavior (Prov 13:24)
          - 4. Learn responsibility (Prov 6)
  - iii. It is the fundamental economic unit
    - 1. There is division of labor (Prov 31)
    - 2. Our first training and skill development
    - 3. Specialization (Prov 31)
    - 4. Production and distribution
    - 5. The primary social security system (Ex. 20, Eph 6)
    - 6. The main solution to poverty
  - iv. It is the first spiritual institution
    - 1. Established before the church (Genesis)

- 2. Is modeled after Christ's relationship with his church (Eph 5)
    - 3. First teacher of morality (Deut 6)
  - b. The family is so vital to this that even in non-Christian homes and societies we see many of these activities within the family
- 2. Any society that undermines marriage and family is on the wrong path spiritually and materially
- 3. Corruptions and distortions
  - a. Why are these important because if the family unit is corrupted and distorted then all that comes from it will be as well. Obviously, all is corrupted by sin but some corruptions are larger and more significant.
  - b. Gay marriage – not marriage – it's a social veneer driven by envy - marriage is a desirable thing, it still means something and the homosexual community is jealous and in some ways respect marriage by desiring it
  - c. But marriage is being undermined far more in other ways than gay marriage
  - d. **Q: What are the implications of the fact that marriage is being abandoned?**
    - i. Abandonment of Marriage
    - ii. People are waiting much longer
      - 1. 30 for men, 28 for women
        - a. Means fewer children
        - b. Means putting other interests first
          - i. An aspect that is self centered
          - ii. Does not accept a key part of the dominion mandate
      - (Gen 1:26-28)
    - iii. People are just not getting married
      - 1. Over half of adults are single
      - 2. Marriage rate is the lowest it has ever been trending down since 1973, it is less than 7 marriages per 1,000 adults
    - iv. Playing married
      - 1. Co habitation
        - a. In 2017 50% of American adults under the age of 44 had been married

- b. 59% had cohabitated at some point
      - c. Overall about 7% of households are cohabitating and 53% are married
    - 2. Out of wedlock births
      - a. 40% of all births in the US
        - i. 35% for Whites
        - ii. 53% for Hispanics
        - iii. 70% for Blacks
    - v. Other corruptions
      - 1. Celebration of polygamy
      - 2. Other immoral and unnatural arrangements
      - 3. Long-term trends are bad
      - 4. Recent trends have improved
  - 4. **Q: But what about divorce? Common in the Church. Everyone's reason is unique and the exception – God understands.**
    - a. Satan hates the family and God hates divorce (**Malachi 2:16**) – also read the list of exceptions and reasons.
    - b. God allows divorce
  - 5. Divorce was and is a bad deal but especially for women
    - a. Easy and no-fault divorce legal developments in the US are fairly new
    - b. First country was the Soviet Union in its complete attempt to stamp out Christianity
    - c. First state was CA in 1970
    - d. Under Mosaic Law
      - i. Divorce was allowed – **Deut 24:1-4**
      - ii. Because of man's hard hearts (**Mt. 19:8**)
      - iii. But the plan was to stay with your first wife (**Pr. 5:18**)
    - e. The Mosaic Rules were not because God approved of divorce but to set up rules protecting women since men were hard hearted and would do this anyway
      - i. Women could be destitute
      - ii. Unable to re-marry
    - f. God required a written certificate of divorce
      - i. Women had independent standing
      - ii. Women were literate

- iii. This was a pretty big advancement at the time when some societies - even centuries later would basically allow a man to sell his wife, replace her with a newer model and so forth – she was essentially property – but not so for Image Bearer of God
- 6. **Q: So divorce was a bad deal then but it is different now with women being empowered and post feminist movement – right?** Still a bad deal for both parties today but is particularly bad for women
  - a. Divorce has spiritual implications
  - b. The brokenness of divorce is reflected in material outcomes
    - i. Incomes fall
    - ii. Poverty rates for singles are much higher
      - 1. 12% for single men
      - 2. 27% for single women
      - 3. 5% or married couples
  - c. Most teen pregnancies are in broken home children
  - d. Most drug use in broken homes
  - e. Most murderers come from broken homes

**First Principle of a Just Society: Marriage will be honored and preserved and treated as the essential institution that it is. Dishonoring marriage leads to break down in civilization at its most fundamental level and spiritual, material, and civil poverty.**

- III. Other protections of human dignity
  - a. Women
    - i. God elevates women – not property but they could own property
      - 1. The Court case *Daughters of Zelophehad v. State of Israel*
        - a. Numbers 27:1-8**
      - 2. Sounds pretty mundane but keep in mind that American women could not own property without a husband or father involved until the 20<sup>th</sup> century
      - 3. Property is vitally important in a just society and we will come back to it again and again
      - 4. Education – all children were to be taught
      - 5. Widows to be cared for and respected
        - a. In many cultures widows are disposable
          - i. American tribes
          - ii. ANE
          - iii. Witches
          - iv. Modern India

6. Rape and violence against women **Deut 22: 23-27**
  - a. Long before the #MeToo movement God was believing the woman and punishing the man unless the woman clearly had a chance to get help and did not
- b. Orphans and aliens
  - i. The other two groups that have historically been abused and neglected are the outsiders and the unclaimed
  - ii. Along with widows they have been considered useless or even dangerous
  - iii. Goes back to the idea that people see others as means (or hinderances) to selfish ends
  - iv. Verses
  - v. Caleb was not a Jew
- c. **Q: What about slavery? The Bible condones slavery doesn't it and how is that protective of human dignity?**
  - i. Different kinds of slavery
    1. War captives – The tribes of Canaan were evil **Lev 18:25-30**
      - a. Child sacrifice
      - b. Fertility Cult prostitution – Baal and Ashtoreth
      - c. Pagans – 234 different gods
      - d. God used Israel as a punishment **Gen 15:13-16**
        - i. He gave the Amorites (Canaanites) 400 years to get it together
        - ii. Sodom and Gomorrah – Gen 19
        - iii. Abraham was there as was Isaac and Jacob
      - e. This was a punishment for evil sometimes slavery was the second best option when total destruction was possible and sometimes ordered
      - f. No application to today other than the church should not tolerate evil but we are not called to take violent action against it
    2. Debt slavery
      - a. A person could be forced or voluntarily enter service to pay off a debt
      - b. Limited time arrangement (6 years max) Deut 15:12-15
      - c. Was not racially based or look anything like modern notions of slavery
    3. Voluntary slavery – Rules in Exodus 21
      - a. If at the end of 6 years a person could choose to stay in service but it was the slaves' choice
      - b. Allowed access to the court system
      - c. Granted all legal protections

**Second Principle of a Just Society: There are no lesser people. All are worthy of dignity, respect and to be full members of society. To do otherwise is to hinder our Christian witness and to exclude them from using their talents to serve God and others to the best of their ability.**

**Question: How is the US doing with protecting human dignity?**

**How about aliens and orphans? What does this imply about immigration policy?**

**What about within Christianity and the church? Is 11:00 on Sunday still the most segregated hour of the week?**