

My Imperfect Family - Sermon 1, The Gospel Foundation

INTRODUCTION: When God created the Heaven's and the Earth - day by day he looked over His creation and said, "It is good" until the last day... he looked on the man Adam and said, "it is NOT GOOD for man to be alone". You know the story, he caused a deep sleep to fall over Adam and took a rib and with that rib he formed Eve. Then God said, "it is very good".

There you have the creation of the first family unit. Before God ordained government, before God ordained nations and tribes, before God ordained the Church... God ordained the family. All other elements of human organization would flourish or falter based on the success or failure of the family.

That is why the enemy knew if he could pollute the first family unit, he could pollute everything that developed after it.

That set into motion God's amazing plan of redemption - in the midst of the fall God said, "one day I'm going to send someone who will crush your head Satan - and guess how I'm going to send him... out of all the possibilities I'm going to choose the family as my vehicle of redemption. Jesus will be known as a Son of Man, he will have a mom, he will have a dad. And the very thing you first attacked will be my vehicle for the salvation of mankind".

The family is ground zero for God's plan of redemption. It is through the family that God rubs redemption in Satan's face.

Marriage - Husbands you want to know how to love your wife - look at how Jesus loves the Church! So Christian marriage then becomes a living parable that Satan has to look at every day of his very limited existence. No wonder he hates marriage and wants to pervert it and destroy it. It's the right hook of God!

So understanding that Marriage is Ground Zero for the Gospel (God's plan of redemption) you can see why the writers of scripture followed a very familiar paradigm in each letter they wrote.

Ephesians and **Colossians** for example - Paul spends the first half (4 chapters) of the letter explaining the Gospel. What is salvation and how is it experienced in our lives. THEN in chapter 5 he drops a big **THEREFORE** and goes directly to making application of how to flesh out the Gospel as a family.

In the book of **Acts** practically every person who gets saved is followed by, "he and his household were baptized".

So now - let's talk about your family or your future family. The secret to doing family well, and experience the abundant life through the family is to cooperate with God in fleshing out the Gospel in your family relationships.

That is what Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

OK, but HOW does it happen? Three ways -

1. The Gospel is an Example to Follow

So what you will notice is that the **NT writers constantly point back to the Gospel** as a source of direction.

Now there are some things that are explicit in the scriptures - for example Do not steal, do not lie, obey your parents, ect. But then God in his wisdom knew that it would be impossible for him to address everything you might possibly encounter in writing - So... he teaches you to look to Jesus to figure out what to do.

NOW I could give you tons of examples but let me show you three that are of supreme importance. Notice how the Apostles dealt with three of life's most difficult issues: Marriage, Money and Sex.

EXAMPLE: Marriage and GOSPEL

Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV)

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Do you see it - look at the Gospel and draw implications for how to treat your wife.

ILLUSTRATION: This past week was a tough week. My wife was going through a few really difficult situations.

- At first I wanted to **coach** her and show her how she could better manage her calendar so this stuff wouldn't happen.
- Then I wanted to **correct** her and tell her how she was wrong on a number of points.

Then I made the mistake of praying about it... Lord, what should I do??? He said, "why don't you love and serve her the way I did the church".

EXAMPLE: Money and GOSPEL

2 Corinthians is one of the longest passages where Paul dealt with money and generosity. Paul didn't use guilt or fear to motivate... look at these pitiful people.

2 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

EXAMPLE: Purity and GOSPEL

In Corinth sexual immorality was rampant. It was the most normal thing in the world for them to consort with prostitutes. How will Paul motivate them to stop?

1 Corinthians 6:13–15 (ESV)

¹³ ...The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

When you are leading your family or teaching your children... do you point them to RULES or do you foster a RELATIONSHIP with Jesus?

ILLUSTRATION: I remember one occasion when something happened in one of our kid's life and I gave them bad advice, I told them the fleshly thing to do, and the kid said, "Dad, is that how Jesus would respond?"

2. The Gospel is a Motive to Foster

Different THEORIES exist concerning how people change:

- **Shame** - That is *guilt* and *fear* motivates change. This parent tends to shame their child into change. Putting them in an emotional if not literal, "time out".
- **Reward** - That is, if I do this I will get a reward. This person tries to obey God because of a cost benefit analysis. God has to bless me. The fact is, there are blessings to obedience. But be careful with this. It has a tendency to cause you to make God a genie in the bottle that is there to serve your true IDOL.
- **Pride** - You are better than that. You come from a better family, you were raised better. Do you parent that way?
- **Mysticism** - That is somehow God is going to zap you. The problem with Mysticism is that I am not at all responsible. If God wants to change me, he must zap me. You can hear this in prayers.

Those are NOT the primary means that God uses to change us. But rather - **God changes us through the Gospel.**

ILLUSTRATION: Dick Lucas noticed how Jesus used the Gospel as Healthy Motivation in the sermon on the Mount.

If you read it at face value it seems to be very disjointed, all over the place. That's not uncommon with Hebrew sermons. The key to interpretation is the final verses. When you come to the end of the sermon the conclusion is very clear - **There are two roads,**

two paths, two trees, so there are two ways. So Jesus says, “In summery you can live like this or like this”.

SO, “if the conclusion of the sermon is that there are two ways, then you will find the two ways scattered throughout the sermon”

But he noticed that Jesus wasn't contrasting:

- Those who pray, with those who don't pray.
- Those who give, with those who don't give.

But rather - both pray, both give... The difference is what Motivated them to pray or give? One is a business transaction, the other is because of who you know God to be.

If you only obey because it is a sensible business transaction, life will inevitably bring you into a temptation that causes you to compromise to the very core. The enemy will make it seem as those the stakes are too high.

BUT, if your obedience comes from being convinced to your core of the truth of the Gospel - even death itself won't tempt you to compromise. Why? Jesus was raised and so will I be raised.

If God loves me enough that he would not keep Jesus from me, why would he keep anything good thing that I need out of my life.

See how that effects HOW you pray? I can assume God will answer my prayer and if He doesn't either - it isn't good for me, or he has something better. But it's not that he doesn't love me that's settled.

3. The Gospel is a Power to Find

Psychologists have discovered that people never really break bad habits, they can only replace them. In order for you to BREAK a current habit, you need a WEIGHTIER replacement, a more glorious replacement. The Gospel is the only thing that Weighty.

Romans 2:4 (ESV)

⁴ ... God's *kindness* is meant to lead you to repentance?

ILLUSTRATION: Thomas Chalmers, “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection”

It is seldom that any of our bad habits disappear by a mere process of natural extinction. At least, it is very seldom that this is done through reasoning...or by the force of mental determination. But what cannot be destroyed may be dispossessed. One taste may be made to give way to another.

So a young man that idolize pleasure may cease from seeking it because he discovers that it drains him of his wealth. So his love for wealth drives out the idol of pleasure.

Perhaps then his love of money is driven out by his worship of ideology or politics. He is willing to give up his money for his new Idol influence and superiority.

This is the way the heart operates. **The old IDOL must be conquered by the new one.**

When the Gospel is believed it becomes the weightiest of all potential realities.

By the way, one of the best ways you can be certain that you are saved is when God moves from the realm of concept to reality. Has that happened for you? Because if it has - all these other things begin to shake.

The more you think on who God is and what he has done through the Gospel the more old idols are expelled. That's how change happens.

ILLUSTRATION: In 1999 there was a movie called, "**Three Seasons**". You've probably never seen it. It was shot in Vietnam.

It's about this Rickshaw rider (which is one of those cycle taxis). His name was **Hai** and Hai is on the lowest part of the social food chain. At one point he gives a ride to this beautiful woman named **LAN** who has just finished her job at one of the nicest hotels in Hanoi. He is smitten by this woman, so every day he goes to this same spot to give the same woman a ride.

Eventually, he realizes that she is a **prostitute**. As he gets to know her she tells him how she wishes she could afford to stay in that hotel without having to "*Work*" and order room service and just enjoy a good nights sleep.

Then one year there was a race, for all of the rickshaw riders. To make a long story short...Hai wins the race. He wins. He gets all this money. Now he can actually do something with his life. Now he can actually be the person that God has created him to be. He can go do something. He can go learn a trade. He can get out.

What do you think Hai does with all the money? He gets a room at this expensive hotel, which took almost all of his money, almost all of his money. He tells Lan, you know, I want to purchase a night with you.

The cinematography of it, it just shows them entering this room and it's a beautiful hotel, and you're expecting things are going to get steamy.... All of a sudden he stops her and he reminds her of their conversations. "Hey, do you remember how you told me on the way home back to your house that your dream was that you would stay in a room like this, right." She's like, "Yeah," "And that you would be able to sleep and not

be kicked out in the morning and order room service, right?" She's like, "Yeah." He goes, "I remembered that."

Then he's like, "Sit down on the bed," and he just talks to her. Before you know it, she's asleep on the bed. Morning and he's in a chair and she's in the bed. She wakes up, and he's got room service there, so they have breakfast together. Then he takes her home.

He doesn't see her for many weeks. Always there at the hotel waiting for her, waiting for her. Finally, he just gets up the nerve and he goes to her house. She's comes in the window and she's yelling at him, "**Get away. I don't want to see you.**" He's like, "What?" Finally, she explains. "**I can't do my job anymore. I can't go back to that lifestyle, because of you, you ruined me.**"

See what happened was Lan was loved unconditional and it caused her to see that she was truly valuable and not just an object.

That's why she was a little bit upset. "What else am I going to do?" She couldn't go back to her life of sin because someone had loved her.

Somebody had used their power to love her, and honor her, and meet her in her brokenness, and it changed her. That is good news.

That's what happens when you experience the gospel. That's our message that we get to share. Loved despite our imperfections, adored as a son and daughter. That's got to be real in here, good people, if we're going to share it with people out here.

HAS THE GOSPEL RUINED YOU? Are you unable to go back into your own life because of a greater reality?