

SPREAD OUT THINK BIG

Week Two | February 25, 2018 | The Church's Role in the Family

PREPARATION

GETTING READY:

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through 1 Timothy 5:8; Genesis 22:18, and Genesis 2:24. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Family is done best in the context of a community of believers (the Church).

THEOLOGY APPLIED

God has always existed in community (the Trinity). For us to experience all God desires for us we too must exist in community.

MEDITATE

"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone;'" (Gen 2:18a)

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Q: *There was one thing that was not good in creation before the fall. What was it?*

Long before there was government, capitalism, hospitals, armies, schools and churches there was family. God has always existed but at some point, He created time and that time is what we call the beginning. In the beginning God took the nothing that was and created all that is. But all that He created was nothing more than the environment that would display His revealed glory and would stand as the home for His primary glory bearer—man. At each step along the timeline of creation God resolutely observed that it was good—until He created man. After He noted the formation of man as very good, He saw something that was not good. In the perfect Garden of Eden, before sin entered the heart of man, God saw that which was not good. It was not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18a). You see, God had never been alone. God eternally exists as one God in three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit in an eternal existence of perfect community—loving and being loved. Therefore, if man was going to bear the image of God (Gen 1:27) he could not be alone. So, God created woman, a helpmate, a wife.

At the very same moment that marriage came into existence so too did family. (Family begins when you say, “I do” not “I’m pregnant”). And it was from this family that God would do His primary work in the world. It is the familial relationships that God most often uses to depict His interactions with us. He is our Father (1 John 3:1). He sent His Son (John 3:16). We have been adopted into the family of God (Rom 8:15). We are children of God (Rom 8:16). We are brothers and sisters in Christ (Mark 3:35). We are the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7). When God was ready to send us the Messiah He did not send us a man who emerged from the wilderness, rather He sent a baby born into a family.

By God’s design, family is the fabric of society. And this fabric is at its strongest when it is found intimately woven into God’s larger family—the Church.

Q: *How would you define the Church?*

The Church itself is nothing more than the gathering of believers. The church is not a building. It is not clergy. It is the living, breathing Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). The big “C” Church or catholic (universal) church is all believers in the world. The little “c” church or local church is a gathering of believers who have agreed to submit to the same local pastoral authority and do the work of the gospel together. The early church described in Acts gives us a good picture of this (Acts 2:42-47).

The Church isn’t the Church without community. In fact, most of the commands in the New Testament can only be obeyed in the presence of others. See the list of “One Anothers” (Rom 12:10, Rom 12:16, Rom 15:7, 2 Cor 13:11, Gal 5:13, Gal 6:2, Eph 4:32, Eph 5:21, Col 3:9, Col 3:16, 1 Thess 3:12, 1 Thess 5:11, 1 Thess 5:15, Heb 3:13, Heb 10:24-25, Jas 5:16, 1 Pet 1:22, 1 Pet 4:9, 1 Pet 5:5, 1 John 3:11).

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

The Bible is littered with indicators and even commands that life works best in the context of community. Therefore, by default, the family also works best in the context of community. In today's lesson, we will discover the necessary components to the life of a family and how they are enhanced by the local church and in particular, the local gathering of believers here at Oakwood:

1. **THE FAMILY MEETS THE NEEDS OF THOSE IN THE FAMILY**
2. **THE FAMILY IS MEANT TO BE A BLESSING TO THOSE AROUND IT**
3. **THE MARRIAGE IS THE NUCLEUS OF THE FAMILY AND NEEDS TO BE NURTURED**
4. **THE FAMILY IS MEANT TO RAISE GODLY OFFSPRING**

GOING DEEPER

+ This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.

THE FAMILY MEETS THE NEEDS OF THOSE IN THE FAMILY

■ 1 TIMOTHY 5:8

The family is intended to be the source of provision for all its members. When a family member has a need, the family is there to meet that need—food, clothing, shelter, love, security and healing—much like the members of a body care for the whole body. The body needs food, so the hands and feet work to acquire food and then the mouth and the rest of the digestive system work to process that food to energy for the whole. When an infection arises in the foot then the white blood cells are engaged and respond to fight that infection.

But at times the body cannot fully care for itself and it requires outside help. It could be so sick that it cannot feed itself or be infected by a disease so powerful that outside medical attention is required. In the same way, the family cannot always meet the needs of the family. That is where a family plugged into the larger community of believers is cared for.

Q: *What would it require of your family to consider the burdens of those in your small group as your own?*

For the most part, we are incredibly self-sufficient due to the wealth and prosperity of our nation. Even still, families exist in our churches that cannot fully care for the needs of their families. That should be where the Church rises up to carry each other's burdens (Gal 6:2) and ensure that no needy person exists among us (Acts 4:32-37). Sadly, the Church has often been negligent to fulfill its mandate to care for those in need, especially to those in the household of faith (Gal 6:10). As a result, the government has taken the responsibility of caring for the indigent. But when the Church acts like the Church (Acts 2:44-45) and your family is rooted in that local gathering of believers, then family is done best.

Here at Oakwood we take seriously the commands to care for our own. As a result, we have many ministries and practices to meet the needs of the members of our church body. If your family is in need, see the opportunities that are in place that can allow our church to care for your needs.

WHAT OAKWOOD DOES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THOSE IN ITS FAMILY

- **WE CARE FOR WIDOWS AND SINGLE-MOMS.** (1 Tim 5:3-10, Jas 1:27)

The church takes special attention to care for widows and single moms with needs.

Contact: Church Office

- **WE CARE FOR ORPHANS.** (Jas 1:27, Ps 82:3)

We provide support for families who have adopted and are fostering children through a support group that meets the first Sunday of every month. Contact: Pastor Robert

We provide clothing and baby supplies to children in the foster care system through our Foster Closet. Contact: Pastor Robert

We provide direction and encouragement for families to get involved in caring for the orphan through our website, certification courses on campus and sermons. Contact: Pastor Robert

- **WE MOURN WITH YOU AND PRAY FOR YOU.** (Rom 12:15, Jas 5:16)

Pain and suffering are a part of life. Our leadership (pastors, deacons, small group leaders) are here and ready to respond and be present during sickness, suffering and loss. Contact: Pastor Steve

Our prayer ministry team is constantly on the clock lifting up the needs that are submitted by the church. Contact: Fill out prayer request in worship guide

- **WE CARE FOR YOU.** (Gal 6:10)

Whether it is gas for your car, food for your pantry, relief and support in dealing with special needs children or support as you care for aging parents. Our church is always ready to respond and walk alongside families to address these trials. Contact: Church Office

THE FAMILY IS MEANT TO BE A BLESSING TO THOSE AROUND IT

GENESIS 22:18

God's original plan was that from one family would come a blessing for all nations. God is fully capable of executing His divine works by Himself, but time and again He chooses to use people and families to carry out His good on the earth. It began with the promise of the offspring of Adam and Eve crushing the head of satan (I don't capitalize his name out of disrespect—Gen 3:15, Rom 16:20). Then salvation through the family of Noah and the promise of blessing through Abraham and on and on the story goes.

While God fully intends for our priority to be to care for our family (1 Tim 5:8), He never intended the family to be so self-absorbed that it neglects the needy around them. The family is meant to serve and be a blessing to those around it. So too, the Church is to be a blessing to those around it so that one day they might receive the full blessing of being added to our number.

Q: *How do you know if you are self-absorbed with your family?*

When the family is rooted in the context of the Church, opportunities to bless and serve others are exponentially increased. If you and your family are not engaged in regular service to others, read carefully the words of Jesus in Matt 25:31-46 and consider its implications.

WHAT OAKWOOD DOES TO BE A BLESSING TO THOSE AROUND IT

- **WE PROVIDE SEVERAL COMMUNITY MINISTRIES THROUGH NEW BRAUNFELS CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES AND FAMILY LIFE CENTER.**

A later lesson will focus more on these ministries, so we will not go into detail here.

Contact: Pastor Brett

- **WE MEET NEEDS AND SHARE THE GOSPEL AROUND THE GLOBE.**

We have a strong and growing Missions ministry that takes the gospel locally, nationally and internationally. Contact: Pastor Jeff Epley

- **OAKWOOD HAS AN ABUNDANCE OF OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE**

Visit: <http://oakwoodnb.com/connect/serve/>

THE MARRIAGE IS THE NUCLEUS OF THE FAMILY AND NEEDS TO BE NURTURED

☐☐ **GENESIS 2:24**

Family begins with marriage. Children are a welcome addition to the family. Like load bearing beams in a home, when the marriage is weak the entire home is under distress. When the marriage collapses, the family is left in shambles.

The vast majority of marriages (even in the Church) live life absent of community. Sure, we go to parties, have fishing buddies, or have mom's with kids who meet at the park, but this is just skimming the surface of life and lacking authentic relationships in which we can stir each other up toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24), confess our sins to each other (Jas 5:16), encourage each other (Heb 10:25) and pray with intimate knowledge for each other (Eph 6:18).

♀: *How did/does your parents' marriage impact your family? How will your kids answer this question in 20 years?*

As a result of the family not living life in community (and due to our innate selfishness), marriages are in a great deal of stress which has a direct impact on the family. The Church has the answer to make marriage work well. God created male and female. He also designed and established the institution of marriage. Therefore, He knows how it works best and how we work best within it. God's design for marriage is oneness (Gen 2:24). Oneness is best obtained within the context of community. When we have other believers providing support, encouragement, admonishment and acceptance then the nucleus of our families will flourish, as well as everything it touches. Marriage works best in the context of the local church.

WHAT OAKWOOD DOES TO NURTURE MARRIAGES

- **RE|ENGAGE**

An opportunity to reconnect, reignite or resurrect your marriage. We utilize God's Word, God's People and God's Spirit to bring about oneness in marriages. Every Sunday night at 6:15 in the Pavilion. Contact: Pastor Robert

- **MARRIAGE WEEKEND**

Every February we have an opportunity to spark your marriage and have a good time doing it. This year's weekend just ended yesterday, but be on the lookout for next year's. Contact: Pastor Robert

- **PREMARITAL**

We have two opportunities to get your marriage off on the right foot. The counseling center offers counseling with a Licensed Professional Counselor. Contact: Counseling Center. We also have a small group based premarital course called Merge. The next one begins March 26th. Contact: Pastor Robert

THE FAMILY IS MEANT TO RAISE GODLY OFFSPRING

■ ■ MALACHI 2:15

The first command given to mankind (and incidentally the first command given to the family) was to be fruitful and multiply. The chief responsibility of the family is to bring children into the world. But not just any children, children who follow the Lord (Deut 6:4-9). The home is to be not only a place where children are taken care of, but also to be trained up (Prov 22:6).

In the 21st Century the need to further populate the earth isn't like it was in the beginning, but the need to raise up godly offspring is greater than ever. Whether it be your own biological child or an adopted/foster child, God wants the family to be a greenhouse for children who are being raised in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4).

Q: *Do you have an active strategy for discipling your kids? What is it?*

This is no small task. That is why discipling our children towards Christ-likeness is done best in the context of the community of believers known as the Church.

When we dedicate a child in a worship service, we are in affect saying that we covenant with that family to help them raise godly offspring. We do this by teaching them God’s Word in their classes and small groups. We do this by setting an example of authentic Christianity for them to see and follow. We do this by supporting families, so they can continue to do the difficult task of raising children who trust and follow the Lord.

God is not content with us simply keeping our children alive into adulthood, He wants us to show them where to find true life which is only found in Jesus (John 10:10b; 14:6).

WHAT OAKWOOD DOES TO HELP YOU RAISE GODLY OFFSPRING

- **MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS.** (1 Cor 11:1)

In Awana and our children’s ministries on Sundays and all the way up through our student ministries, we put godly teachers in the path of your kids to love them, teach them and train them. To say, “This is the way—walk in it.” (Isa 30:21).

- **RETREATS AND EVENTS**

We have a myriad of opportunities for kids/students to do things out of the ordinary to spark their faith. Some of these retreats are even chances for parents to connect with their kids on an uncommon spiritual level (Father/Son Retreat & Mother/Daughter Retreat). Check out our website to see all that is going on. www.oakwoodnb.com

- **PASTOR’S PICKS**

In the foyer of the Children’s Building our Oakwood Kids staff has made some family devotional and other resources available for you to look at that we recommend as good equipping materials for your family.

NEXT STEPS

+ Connect the truths from God’s Word to your daily life. Process how what you’ve learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.

- ♀: *Do you have a need in your family that you need to reach out to your church with? Start with your small group today. Small group, are you coming to the aid of your brothers and sisters? Are there needs unmet in your small group? How will you ensure that no needy person exists among you?*
- ♀: *How is your family being a blessing to those around you? How and who will you resolve to be a blessing to?*
- ♀: *How are you pursuing oneness in your marriage (or preparing for oneness should God give you a spouse one day)? How would you rate your marriage today? Where do you want it to be? What are you doing to get there?*
- ♀: *What are you doing to actively disciple your kids? Does your small group feel the freedom to impart spiritual instruction to your children? Why not?*

PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- God, help me be aware of the needs of my community of believers and give me the faith and resolve to carry their burdens.
- God, open my eyes to see how You have gifted and resourced my family and lead me to deploy my family's gifts to be a blessing to those around us.
- God, grow my marriage in oneness. Help me not be passive, but to aggressively pursue You and my spouse so that the nucleus of our family might be strong.
- God, give me the grace and vision to raise my children or those children You have put in my path towards godliness so that the next generation might praise You.

