

## “Taking Marriage and the Family Seriously”

Why should Christians care about marriage and the family in our current culture? One reason is because strengthening marriages and families is how we “seek the welfare of the city” (Jer. 29:7). Scripture teaches that marriage and family are institutions created by God. He created them into the very fabric of creation. They are built into the fabric of creation in order for men and women to flourish. “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion.” Thus, to strengthen marriages and families helps God’s good creation.

As institutions created by God, marriage and the family recognize our complementarity as male and female. A consequence of this complementarity is the continuation of humanity. The union of male and female within the bounds of marriage keeps life going.

Furthermore, the environment of a mother and father is optimal for the raising of children. Even secular literature recognizes this benefit, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics or the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development which conclude the mother and father environment as the optimal place for the receiving and raising of children.

One of my favorite pieces of choral music is the Hallelujah Chorus by Handel. It includes different parts. One part is not less important or inferior to the other parts. Instead, their complementarity requires them to learn how to sing in harmony. Once they learn to sing their parts well, the complementarity of the parts brings richness to the Hallelujah Chorus. In the same way, the complementarity of male and female doesn’t make one less important or inferior. Instead, the challenge is to learn how to live well as male or female in marriage and family.

Unfortunately, there is an opposite account of the origin of the family and marriage. Instead of created institutions of God, this account states that marriage and the family are creations of the state. For example, the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Rousseau argued for the rise in government over the family, stating: “the newly born infant, upon first opening his eyes, must gaze upon the fatherland, and until his dying day should behold nothing else”. The fatherland is the state and the state replaces mom and dad.

Over 100 years ago, G.K. Chesterton once quipped that the family is the primary check on the control of the government. I think this is true. Marriage and family are important pieces of what it means to be created in God’s image. Affirming the complementarity of marriage, equipping marriages, and strengthening families seeks the welfare of the city. Christians must model marital blessing and reach out to their neighbors to encourage and support.

Judson Marvel

Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church (PCA), Sierra Vista, AZ