

I. Introduction

- A. If you turn to the contents page in your Bible you will see that the first four books in the Bible are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
 - 1. In the book of Genesis, we have the creation, the flood, and the Tower of Babel. But most importantly we have God choosing Abraham to be the special recipient of his grace.
 - 2. In the book of Exodus we have the wonderful story of redemption. The people of God were slaves, but God set them free. He redeemed them.
 - 3. Leviticus gives us both the way of salvation, and the way of life after salvation. It teaches all this through methods of worship, the practice of offerings and sacrifices, and the functions of the priesthood.
 - 4. When we get to Numbers, the people are in the wilderness. They will wander there for 40 years. Numbers shows us the walk and warfare of the wilderness. And that is what we will look at today.
- B. Welcome to part three of our series called **Under Construction**. We are looking at how God makes our hearts Christ's home.
 - 1. To illustrate that, we are looking at what the Bible calls the tabernacle. This was the portable worship center for ancient Israel. It was a carefully designed and carefully constructed tent. Every detail was explained by God to Moses, and then by Moses to the skilled craftspeople who built it. This is the tabernacle.
 - 2. In part one we saw that the first thing God does to make our hearts Christ home is to anchor our minds to absolute truth.
 - 3. In part two we saw the second thing God does is hammer into our souls our own freedom. This is your power and dominion restored to you. It was restored through the ransom paid by a Savior... through the atoning work of Christ.
 - a) We are under construction, and this is what God is doing in our hearts.
 - 4. Today I want to add a third essential elements in the divine construction project God is working on in our hearts. I invite you to meditate with me, in connection with the Old Testament Tabernacle, and the topic of...
 - a) **Marriage and Family**
- C. Here is our starting Scripture for today:
 - 1. *Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses.* (Numbers 2:34, NKJV)
- D. At the time this is written, we're talking about 2 million Jews. They are going to march to the Promised Land. Then they are going to let fear dominate their lives. Then they are going to turn around and march away from the Promised Land. They will wander in the wilderness for forty years.
- E. For 2 million people, all of this marching and all of this movement requires organization. Without that, it's confusion and chaos.
- F. In addition to all the marching around, they are also going to have to fight some wars. It turns out the wilderness is full of enemies. God's people will be attacked multiple times by enemies. They will go to war. That requires organization too.

II. The Organization

- A. That organization happens in two major ways. This is how Moses gave order and structure the people of God.
 - 1. The first way was by marriage and family.
 - 2. The second way was by the tabernacle.
- B. The people of Israel were organized by tribes, clans, and families. And families were organized by marriage.
- C. Basically, the whole organization of ancient Israel rested on married couples and their families.
 - 1. Marriage and Family are ordained by God in Genesis, where God's command to leave and to cleave require the constant spinning off of new, related but separate, family units.
 - 2. Marriage and Family are enshrined by God in three of the Ten Commandments in Exodus — honor your father and mother, do not commit adultery, do not covet your neighbor's wife.
 - 3. Marriage and Family are detailed by God in Leviticus where laws are given defining how close a relative a person can marry, and punishments are given for violating the sexual sanctity of marriage.
 - 4. And now, Marriage and Family are made the building blocks of the fledgeling nation of God's own people here in the book of Numbers.
- D. The world has never had a greater teacher on marriage and family than the Bible.
- E. The world has never had a greater teacher on monogamy—one man and one woman in one marriage for one lifetime—than the Bible.

III. Ideals

- A. I want to make it clear that we will be talking about God's *ideals* when he created family and marriage.
- B. I want to say that nobody has lived up to God's ideals. We all fall short.
- C. So, when I talk about marriage and family, let's just agree that nobody's perfect. Let's just agree that when we talk about God's ideals, we all fall short. That means that something you hear is going to make you feel uncomfortable, or may be guilty, or maybe ashamed. Welcome to the club.
- D. God forgives. God restores.

IV. The Tribal Units

- A. The Jews were divided into tribes.
 - 1. A mom and dad and kids made up a family. Several families made up a household (all the sons of one father with their wives and kids). Several households made up a clan. Several clans made up a tribe.
- B. Everybody knew their ancestry and genealogy. It was just normal to know that.
 - 1. *Then Moses and Aaron took these men who had been mentioned by name, and they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month; and they recited their ancestry by families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, each one individually.* (Numbers 1:17, 18)

2. They recited their ancestry. Another translation says they declared their pedigree.
3. If you trace back your natural pedigree all the way to the source, you will make a discovery. Your *natural* ancestry is a long line of sinners. You come from a ruined stock. You are a fallen child of a fallen family.
4. But your *spiritual* ancestry is an entirely different thing.
5. Christian, can you recite your spiritual pedigree? Can you declare it with clarity and confidence?
 - a) *Beloved, now we are children of God...* (1 John 3:2)
 - b) *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed...* (Galatians 3:26, 29)
 - c) *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...* (Romans 8:14, 16)
6. We are of the household of God and the family of faith. That is our spiritual pedigree. That's the most important thing for us today.
7. Just as it was for the Jews in Moses' day. But their physical pedigree was important too. Marriage and family were the building blocks of society. The building blocks of a nation.
8. It is the same way for us today.

V. The Second Way

- A. But there's a second way that God brought organization to the families and tribes of his people. Once again this had to do with the Tabernacle.
 1. *And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.*
 2. *"On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, those of the standard of the forces with Judah shall camp according to their armies... Issachar... Zebulun..."* (Numbers 2:1-3)
 3. *"On the south side shall be the standard of the forces with Reuben according to their armies...Simeon... Gad..."* (Numbers 2:10)
 4. *"And the tabernacle of meeting shall move out with the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps; as they camp, so they shall move out, everyone in his place, by their standards. (Numbers 2:17)*
 5. *"On the west side shall be the standard of the forces with Ephraim according to their armies...Manasseh...Benjamin..."* (Numbers 2:18)
 6. *"The standard of the forces with Dan shall be on the north side according to their armies...Asher...Naphtali..."* (Numbers 2:25)
 - a) The number of warriors adds up to 603,550 (v. 32), plus women, children, and the priestly tribe.
- B. Moses lays out in painstaking detail the encampment of the Jews as they wander in the wilderness.
- C. And look at what is dead center in the middle.
 1. The tabernacle. The Ark of the Covenant. The presence of God. The doctrines of Salvation. The ransom to set us free. The profoundest structures of amazing grace. The truest truth and most real reality.
 2. The clearest picture, portrait, and type of the Lord Jesus Christ...
 - a) His person, his work, his incarnation, his undiminished deity and unaugmented humanity united in one person forevermore, his teachings, his love, his courage, his strength, his miracles, his crucifixion, his atoning work, his time in the grave, his glorious resurrection, his ascension, his return in glory, and his eternal reign... all of it understand and taught and the center of a godly person's thinking and choosing and speaking and living.
 3. **The eternal, transcendent love of God in three dimensions and living color is at the middle of existence for the Child of God.**
 - a) This was the center. This was the core. This was the heart.
 - (1) All of this embedded in that tabernacle.
 4. Under the Law of Moses, the people of God put all of Christ and all of His Gospel in the middle of their very existence.
- D. How would you describe your middle, your heart, your core, your center?
- E. If you are a Christian, God is at work in you. You are God's construction project.
- F. And God himself is making your heart Christ's home. Making your heart a suitable habitation for the indwelling Christ.
 1. Because that is the only way to bring order to the chaos.
 2. The only way to bring peace in the storms of life.
 3. The only way to know reality and truth.
 4. And the only way experience the glorious, abundant, and adventurous life of grace and truth and faith you are destined for.
- G. God originated it. Moses taught it. The prophets preached it. Jesus executed it. The apostles explained it. Today I'm preaching it. And now it is for us to live it out.

VI. Putting it All Together

- A. God loves his world. He has given us four institutions to make this fallen world more bearable.
 1. **Free Will (Dominion/Liberty)**
 2. **Marriage**
 3. **Family**
 4. **(For next time)**
- B. All of them protect and strengthen the first one.
 1. God instituted marriage to protect free will and human dominion.
 2. God instituted family to protect free will and human dominion.
 3. There's one more for next time.
- C. **The devil hates human dominion.**

- D. Satan wants that dominion. He wants the throne of heaven. His life's ambition is the five "I wills" of Isaiah 14... I will. I will. I will. I will. I will be like the Most High God.
- E. He plans and plots to displace God. To replace God. To be the one sovereign in the universe.
- F. So that old serpent is the sworn enemy of liberty. He detests it.
- G. The devil has declared himself the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4).
- H. And he is a Tyrant. A Bully. A dictator. The violator of the human soul, and the jailer of the heart.
 - 1. If he can imprison you politically, he will.
 - 2. If he can control you financially, he will.
 - 3. If he can enslave you sexually, he will.
 - 4. If he can dominate you religiously, he will.
- I. Satan has constructed a whole world-system to shackle the human heart... to devour your dominion.
 - 1. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Peter 5:8, NKJV)
- J. He's devouring your liberty and nullifying your dominion.
- K. This isn't just theology. This is actual bondage to sin.
- L. It plays out in every addiction and dysfunction, every bit of hedonism and stoicism, and of depression and despair.
- M. When the Bible talks about these things, it isn't just theology. It's about your emotions, your instincts, your habits... your psychology.
- N. Bondage exists in your heart and mind before it exists in your behavior.
- O. Yes, if you have been saved, Jesus Christ has set you free. He has paid your ransom. You are redeemed. We talked about that last time.
 - 1. That's your truest truth and deepest reality. That's correct doctrine, theology, and truth.
 - 2. But doctrine and theology and truth are just the start. That's essential. Non-negotiable even.
 - 3. But, now, your emotions catch up.
 - 4. You need something more.
- P. And that is one of the greatest blessings of marriage.
 - 1. **God gave you your spouse to unshackle you from every force that nullifies your dominion.**
 - a) The specific woman or man — with their specific personality, history, and even imperfections and weaknesses — is intentionally designed by God to unbury the real you.
 - b) No one knows your dark side better than your spouse.
 - c) Your husband or your wife has a mystical ability to put their finger on an area in your life where you are enslaved to sin.
 - d) It's the most annoying thing in the world.
 - e) If you let it, it can be the most liberating thing in the world.
 - f) God intends marriage for your healing.
 - 2. **Marriage protects free will by shoving the theology of redemption deep inside your psyche.**
 - a) Yes Jesus has set you free — every one who is saved. Addiction and arrogance and dysfunction and self-righteousness have no power over you but what you give them.
 - b) So why do you keep giving the power?
 - c) The prison cell is open. What keeps you from walking free?
 - (1) *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.* (Romans 6:12, 13)
 - d) What keeps us from walking free is simply that we keep presenting ourselves to sin...
 - (1) *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.* (Romans 6:14)
 - e) But you keep selling your soul, and giving sin a false dominion, and your spouse calls you out.
 - (1) You give gambling a false dominion.
 - (2) Or greed, or selfishness, or alcohol, or drink, or immorality, or lust, or anger, or meanness false dominion in your life.
 - (a) And your wife calls it out. Your husband calls it out.
 - (b) You can SEE the pain you cause... it's in their eyes, their disappointment, their tears, their shutting down...
 - (c) They're stuck with you and they won't let you get away with anything that shackles you to darkness and brings it into the home. What you're stuck with, they're stuck with.
 - (d) So they call it out.
 - (e) Don't resent that. That's love.
 - i) Because running away would fix it. That false dominion goes with YOU.
 - (f) It's the only way we can address the things that hold us captive and truly live the freedom purchased by Calvary's cross. No one else can do this. No one else knows our secrets. It's tough love, but only then can we wield the scepter and wear the crown of true dominion and free will.
 - f) So God gave marriage. No hiding. No getting away with it.
 - 3. **It takes a husband or a wife to complete our soul by knocking grace into the broken areas of our heart.**
 - 4. Your spouse will insist. A wife wants to be proud of her man. A husband wants to be proud of his woman. Of their character and integrity. This isn't about looks.
 - 5. This is about a quality human being.
 - a) A woman wants a quality man to husband her and father her children.

- b) A man wants a virtuous woman to help him and to mother his children.
- 6. So our spouses constantly mirror our unredeemed character flaws.
 - a) Marriage drives a stake through the heart of selfishness.
 - b) Marriage provides a safe place to let down our masks.
 - c) Marriage is the fastest way to create empathy in our hearts. When we see the pain in our spouse's eye of an unkind word, it changes us, and can deliver us if we'll humble ourselves.
 - d) Marriage creates a mutual defense pact. My wife has my back and I have hers.
 - e) Marriage provides the only healthy context for any and all sexual activity. That kind of vulnerability requires a marital kind of commitment. That kind of giving yourself requires a committed reciprocation of giving oneself in a lifetime commitment called marriage.
 - f) Marriage creates the most healthy context for rearing happy, well-adjusted children. A godly Christian will do anything rather than harm vulnerable children. Every bit of research supports the fact that children thrive best with a loving and mature father in the home. Thank God for his grace when we blow it! We're talking ideals here, but this is God's ideal.
- 7. I am saying that marriage and family exist to protect freedom and dominion.
 - a) Do you want to see a kid in bondage? Do you want to see a young man or young woman grow up without a sense of dominion? Rip apart their family. Or take away mom or dad.
 - b) Thank God he is a father to the fatherless and a mother to the motherless. So if that's your story, you can overcome and rise above.
 - c) But let's admit it. It's harder on everybody when a family breaks down.
- 8. It doesn't take a village. It just takes a marriage.
 - a) But not only a marriage. I know some marriages have been broken. And I know some are widowed. And some have never been married.
 - b) God has other ways of working in you and on you. Friendships. Fellowships. Life experiences. The Grace Pathway.
 - c) But today, I'm talking about Marriage.

Q. Why did God organize human society around marriage?

R. God organized human society around marriage and family because he believes in your freedom and applauds your dominion, and that's what marriage will strengthen, if you let it.

- 1. Marriage creates order in society. Every institution in society must support, defend, and nurture the primacy of marriage and family, or that societal institution should be dismantled.
- 2. Marriage is more than a piece of paper. It is a sacred commitment between one man and one woman for one lifetime before God and a cloud of witnesses.
 - a) Marriage is also a civic commitment recorded by civil authorities for the ordering of finances, properties, and estates, and for the prevention of incest and the harm it causes.
 - b) Any man or woman unwilling to make that commitment is unworthy of a spouse and should not be trusted with either sex or with children.
 - c) That's God's plan.
- S. So God organized his people. God organized his world. By families. By marriages. By husbands and wives. And he put the Tabernacled person of the Lord Jesus Christ right in the middle of it.
 - 1. If the church doesn't stand up for marriage, no one will.
 - 2. If Christians don't focus on the family, no one will.
 - a) For a world in chaos, God gave marriage and family.
 - b) For a heart that's lonely and afraid, God gave marriage and family.
 - c) For little kids with the light still in their eyes, God gave marriage and family.
- T. America was blessed so much and for so long because for so long, America honored marriage and honored family.
 - 1. Today, we're just coasting on yesterday's blessings.
 - 2. It's time to honor the institutions of marriage and family again. If we don't our national dominion will be taken away.

VII. Under Construction

- A. I know life can be hard. I know we've all made mistakes. We all have regrets. We all wish we could have a redo of parts of our lives, of our marriage, or our lack of marriage, of our parenting, of our families.
- B. We all look back and wish things had turned out differently.
- C. Whatever else the tabernacle was, it was a place of forgiveness.**
 - 1. Of starting over.
 - 2. And that's great news.
 - 3. Because if Jesus can save your soul, he can save your marriage too.
 - 4. If he can redeem your life, he can redeem your family too.
 - 5. If he can find one lost sheep, he can find one lonely woman or man, and bring you to someone who's going to be great for you.
 - 6. Believe him and ask him.
 - 7. So that one day, when the time comes, you can recite your ancestry by families, by their fathers' houses...
- D. Making my heart Christ's home... through the word of God, the people of God, the worship of God... AND radically enhanced through marriage and family too.