



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)
Lesson 5.7 – The Doctrine of Providence or Preservation

God's Concern for Family Life on Earth

Out of love and concern for humanity, God established the institutions of the family and the government. God laid the foundation for family life in the very beginning by instituting marriage. We read in Genesis 1:27-28: **“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’”** In Genesis 2 we are further informed that God made the male human first and then said: **“It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him”** (Genesis 2:18). Since none of the other created beings was a suitable companion for the male, **“the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man”** (Genesis 2:21-22).

In this way God instituted family life: He joined the man and the woman together and gave them the power and the command to reproduce. Genesis 2:24 may be a continuation of what Adam says in Genesis 2:23, but more likely it is a word of God given to Moses concerning marriage: **“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”** (Genesis 2:24). It was God's intention that infants resulting from the union of husband and wife should be cared for by their father and mother until they reach an age when they themselves are able to form a new family through marriage. Husband and wife are to become one flesh. This union is to be an even closer relationship than the relationship between children and their parents.

When the Pharisees came to Jesus with a question concerning divorce, Jesus pointed them back to God's institution of marriage in Genesis: **“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”** (Matthew 19:4-6). Notice that Jesus emphasizes the number **“two”**, and He emphasizes the fact these two are **“male and female.”**

When the Pharisees objected that Moses allowed divorce, Jesus replied: **“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so”** (Matthew 19:8). Divorce was not God's intention for marriage. Marriage was meant to be a lifelong institution between one man and one woman. God provided marriage as a blessing to all humanity. Marriage provides for companionship and for the bringing of children into the world with a father and a mother.

For believers in Jesus Christ marriage has even more meaning. The apostle Paul points out the connection between Christ and His Church, on one hand, and a husband and wife, on the other: **“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her... This a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church”** (Ephesians 5:22-32).

The apostles Paul and Peter both make the point that the husband, created first at the beginning, is the rightful head of the family. Peter writes: **“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands...For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed, Abraham, calling him lord”** (1 Peter 3:1-6). Paul establishes the headship principle in his first letter to the Corinthians: **“The head of woman is man,”** and then Paul explains: **“For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but the woman for the man...Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through women, but all things are from God”** (1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9, 11-12). This order was established at creation.

The Sixth Commandment, **“You shall not commit adultery”** (Exodus 20:14), is part of God’s natural law written in man’s heart. The concept of Marriage is found throughout the world, even among those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior. Nevertheless, God’s gift of marriage has been abused by mankind from the very beginning, and it is still being abused today. Polygamy was introduced very early into human history. Lamech, a descendant of Cain, took two wives and showed how he despised God in his heart by saying: **“I have killed a man for wounding me... If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold”** (Genesis 4:19-24). By the days of the patriarchs, polygamy was so common that God did not even put a stop to it among His own people. Abraham, Jacob, Esau, Elkanah, David, Solomon, and many of the kings of Israel and Judah had more than one wife. The Law of God given to Israel even allowed for more than one wife, but we must say with Jesus: **“But from the beginning it was not so”** (Matthew 19:8).

Christians living in the New Testament era are guided by Paul’s clear words to the Corinthians: **“Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband”** (1 Corinthians 7:2). A spiritual overseer in the church is to be **“the husband of one wife”** (1 Timothy 3:2). This means he is to have eyes for only one woman, his wife. Many a church leader has had his ministry ruined by unfaithfulness in marriage.

The Scriptures list many forms of adultery, which is the corruption of marriage. The Greek word *porneia* (πορνεία, fornication or sexual immorality) covers a multitude of these evils, such as premarital sexual relations, extramarital sexual relations, spouse swapping, promiscuity, same-sex marriage, same-sex sexual relations (homosexuality), group sex, bestiality, prostitution, sex slavery, and pornography. Jesus even considered sexual lust a form of adultery, saying to His disciples: **“Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”** (Matthew 5:28). All of these sins are contrary to God’s plans for marriage and family life.

There are two instances when God Himself allows a marriage to be broken by divorce. Sexual unfaithfulness on the part of one marriage partner allows the injured partner to declare that the marriage has been broken. Jesus said: **“Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery”** (Matthew 5:32, the last part of this verse is better translated: **“makes her the victim of adultery”**). Notice that Jesus permits divorce in a case of sexual immorality. The apostle Paul refers to desertion on the part of an unbelieving spouse as another reason to declare the marriage broken. **“If the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases”** (1 Corinthians 7:15). Except for such cases as these, divorce itself is a form of adultery – the breaking of a marriage that God wants to endure until death.

In the home, the mother shares authority with the father. The Fourth Commandment says: **“Honor your father and your mother”** (Exodus 20:12). The wise Solomon taught: **“Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old”** (Proverbs 23:22). As children have responsibility towards their parents, so parents have responsibility regarding their children. In his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, Paul writes: **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right...And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training**

and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4). **“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged”** (Colossians 3:20-21). Children planning to marry should seek the wise counsel of their parents, who certainly want the best possible spouses for their children. Abraham was concerned with finding a good wife for his son Isaac. Isaac was in turn concerned with finding a suitable wife for his son Jacob. But when Jacob's brother Esau took two wives without Isaac's approval, we read that these wives **“were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah** (Genesis 26:35).

Marriage, however, is a blessing of God for this world only. Jesus clearly taught: **“Those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage”** (Luke 20:35). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) falsely teach that marriage is for eternity. They have no Scriptural basis for this teaching, which goes against the clear teaching of Jesus Himself.

When nations and peoples honor marriage and family life, they generally receive many earthly blessings from God, even if they do not yet know Jesus Christ. When the apostle Paul quoted the Fourth Commandment, he repeated the promise God made in connection with it: **“Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth”** (Ephesians 6:2-3). Earthly blessings will come when God's pattern for marriage and family life is followed. **“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward”** (Psalm 127:3). **“Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun”** (Ecclesiastes 9:9).

When men, in their supposed wisdom, have messed with God's pattern for marriage and family life, the results have been disastrous. When the Roman Catholic Church insisted that their priests not marry and considered unmarried monks and nuns to be holier than married people, this resulted in a tendency toward unnatural arrangements, such as homosexuality and sexual relationships outside of marriage. Easy divorces have led to what has been called “serial polygamy”. Deviation from the sexual patterns ordained by God has led to sexual immorality of all kinds. It has led to broken homes and viewing women as sex objects rather than as real persons for whom Jesus died.

Questions

1. What two institutions has God established for the well-being of man on the earth?
2. When and how did God institute marriage?
3. What has God's design for family life been from the beginning?
4. What is marriage, according to the Bible?
5. What would you say to a polygamist who claims he is following David's example?
6. Why did God allow divorce in Old Testament law?
7. What is the proper relationship between husband and wife?
8. Which forms of *porneia* are most common in your locale?
9. In what situation does God allow divorce?
10. What responsibilities do children and their parents have under God?
11. What are some ways in which fathers could provoke their children to wrath?
12. Why is it important to remember that mothers also have authority over their children?
13. What false conclusions are drawn by Roman Catholic and Mormons concerning marriage?
14. What passages in Holy Scripture deal with homosexuality?