FBS “Marriage Matters: Wisdom from God’s Word—Family” 5-14-17

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**Intro.** When searching for songs about the family, popular songs come up, like “We Are Family;” “Reunited;” “Lean on Me;” “Homeward Bound;” and more. What you don’t find much of are songs about in-laws other than John Bates’ “My In-Laws Are Outlaws” or Ernie K. Doe’s “Mother-In-Law”—neither of which have complimentary things to say about in-laws. Today, we wrap up our series on “Marriage Matters: Wisdom from God’s Word” from Proverbs & deal with the subject of “Family.”

Theme: Marriage & family

Background: Proverbs is classified as wisdom literature—helping people know what’s right & do it. It is primarily a father’s advice to his son about life issues—work, finances, marriage, raising children, character issues & more

* While I argue the biggest issue in marriage is communication, the next 3 are sex, finances & family (usually in-laws, but sometimes step-children or putting the couple’s children above a spouse).
* **In light of “Marriage Matters,” incorporate the following order in carrying out family loyalty:**

**1. Put the Lord 1st with loyal surrender (1:7; 3:5-6; 30:1-9)**

* Much of what you might expect the wisdom literature to say about one’s relationship to the Lord is implied through statements about pursuing wisdom, but that relationship is absolutely foundational to the rest of your life—married or not
* From the Christian perspective, Jesus should be foundational to your life & your marriage & family
* You can talk about the family without talking about Jesus but failing to put Jesus at the center of your family will eventually lead to ruin
* Not only does Solomon talk about trusting the Lord with all your heart, but Agur urges others not to profane God’s name or deny the Lord but to know Him personally (30:4, 9)

Illus: Don’t just give Jesus lip service, but put Him at the center of your life—pray to Him at meal time & read Scripture with your wife/family & worship Him as the gathered church & tell others about Him & give to Him in kingdom work—that’s loyal surrender

**2. Put your spouse 2nd with loving commitment (12:4; 18:22; 31:10-31)**

* The greatest relationship command outside of one’s relationship to the Lord is to leave father & mother & cleave to your spouse & weave your lives together (which often includes having children)
* Solomon speaks of the value of an excellent wife (12:4; 18:22) & describes what she is like (31:10-31)—he also wrote an entire book as a love poem between him & the Shulammite woman to emphasize loving commitment

Illus: Marriages & families are in trouble today & one woman thought of a way she could help struggling families & spouses who didn’t have time for cooking & cleaning & various errands. Karen Donovan started Rent-A-Wife, a small Petaluma, California, company created to help clients decorate their homes, balance checkbooks, run errands, etc. Donovan, who launched her business through a small ad in the local newspaper, was already thinking big after four months of operation. She wanted to hire her father to initiate Rent-A-Husband and her two teens to start Rent-A-Family. “We can do what any family does,” the newfangled entrepreneur joked. “We can come over and eat all the food, turn on all the lights, put handprints on the walls, take showers and leave the towels on the floor. When clients are finished with Rent-A-Family, they’ll have to call Rent-A-Wife.” (*Campus Life*, October, 1980)—I’m not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but men, if you hire “Rent-A-Wife,” you’ll be looking for a new wife! Put your spouse 2nd & show your commitment to each other, even if you have to pitch in with various chores around the house.

Illus: “An exhaustive study shows that no woman has ever shot her husband while he was doing the dishes” (Earl Wilson)—a man may have to help his wife or a wife may have to focus more on her husband than her children in order to keep the marriage sizzling

* Unless you have several little ones who need your help at mealtime & out in public, husbands & wives should normally sit beside each other or across from each other so they can hold hands or communicate more easily than being constantly distracted with the children
* Putting spouses ahead of children may mean the children don’t sleep with you in bed or you intentionally plan date nights with your spouse (if you have trouble finding babysitters, our deacons love to take care of other people’s kids—that’s what they’re here for!)

**3. Put your children 3rd with nurturing provision (13:1, 24; 15:10, 12; 22:6, 15; 27:5; 29:15, 17; cf. Ephesians 6:1-3)**

* The 2nd command to “love your neighbor as yourself” literally means “near one” & would apply to your spouse first & children in your home next (or possibly parents, especially if they live with you)
* All throughout Proverbs, Solomon gives advice & wisdom to his son—he cares for him & wants him to make wise choices in life
* What I mean by “nurturing provision” is helping meet their needs financially (providing for the family’s needs) & nurturing through discipline & instruction (13:24; 15:10, 12; 22:15; 29:15, 17)

Illus: “Who can ever forget Winston Churchill’s immortal words: ‘We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills.’ It sounds exactly like our family vacation” (Robert Orben)

* 22:6 is a proverb—a general truth about life—not an ironclad promise (I have more to say about parenting starting in next week’s series on “Parenting Matters”)

**4. Put your parents (and parents-in-law) 4th with honor & care (1:8; 19:27; 23:22, 25; 28:7; 30:11, 17; cf. Exodus 20:12; 1 Timothy 5:4)**

* Proverbs is saturated with commands to listen to your father & mother (1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 6:20; 7:1; 23:22)—if you listen to them, they will rejoice! (23:25); if you don’t listen to them, it will not end well for you! (30:11, 17)
* While the command for children in the home is “obey your parents in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1), the command for all children, no matter the age, is to “honor your father & your mother” (Exodus 20:12)—this includes father-in-law & mother-in-law, because even though they aren’t your parents, they are your spouse’s parents
* As they reach the latter years of their lives & need additional care, as their child & as a believer, you are responsible to care for them (1 Timothy 5:4)

Illus: At the annual family-reunion picnic, a young bride led her husband over to an old woman busily crocheting in a rocker. “Granny,” she said, touching the old woman’s hand affectionately, “this is my new husband.” The woman eyed him critically for a long moment, then asked abruptly, “Do you desire children?” Startled by her bluntness, the young man blushed and stammered, “Well-uh-yes, I do very much.” “Well,” she said, looking scornfully at the large tribe gathered around the six picnic tables, “try to control it!” (Colleen Pifer)

* At a certain stage of life, your responsibility to care for & provide for your parents may be greater than caring for & providing for your children—if you are 65 years old & have a 95 year old parent who can no longer care for himself, as well as a 35 year old son who is providing for his family, for a season of life, you will need to make sure your elderly parent is cared for before doing certain things for your child & his family
* If you have siblings, you should talk with them & find out how you are going to take care of your parents in their advanced years—don’t assume the oldest will do it & don’t put it all on one sibling—if one of them houses them, you can provide some finances to help cover food from time to time—the important thing is to make sure they are cared for

**Conc.** How many of you grew up in church singing hymns? You surely remember “The Family of God,” right? The chorus goes like this: “I’m so glad I’m a part of the Family of God, I’ve been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His Blood! Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, For I’m part of the family, The Family of God.” You can have a great marriage & be wonderful parents in providing for your children or honor your own parents well, but if you have not surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life for you, then your few years here on earth as a “Family Man” or “Family Woman” won’t matter. Will you trust Jesus & then follow through on these other commitments to your family?