

Introduction:

1. This evening's lesson is a tale of two families. One is physical. The other is spiritual.
 - a. The physical, nuclear family is typically made up of a mom, dad and 1.8 kids. It is called "nuclear" because it is built around a "nucleus"—that being the husband and wife.
 - b. The family of God is comprised of brothers and sisters who are built around Jesus Christ.
 - c. If you are part of the Lindale church, then you are part of that spiritual family built around Jesus Christ. Whether you have a traditional nuclear family or not—you belong to this family.
2. A current theme at Dowlen Road church is "We Are Family."
 - a. Our focus is that the church is made up of family members—a big family of brothers and sisters in Christ. That will be a part of the lesson this evening, but in a very different way.
 - b. I am going to say something that you will likely find radical, shocking, or may even think is wrong.
3. It is this: Churches may have put far too much emphasis on the traditional family—I am talking about mom, dad and the kids. Churches may have done this to the harm of the spiritual family.
 - a. Across the nation, church ministries are built around the idea of (physical) family. Family friendly churches are the order of the day. Some churches even call themselves "family" churches.
 - b. This is not to say that the traditional family is unimportant or that we would demean it. But like any good thing, when family becomes the main thing, that can become a harmful thing.

The Lesson:**I. The Nuclear Family: A Good Thing—But Not the Ultimate Thing.**

- A. We strongly teach that the traditional, biblical model of the nuclear family is a good thing.
 1. We uphold the institution of marriage as from God, Matthew 19:4-6.
 2. We stand upon the truth that husband and wife ought to stay together, Mathew 19:6.
 3. We oppose divorce (separation), except on grounds of infidelity, Matthew 19:9.
 4. We oppose all unlawful remarriages, Matthew 19:9.
 5. We firmly teach that children deserve a father and mother in the home, Ephesians 6:1-4.
 6. We stand on the Bible truth that the husband is head of the home, Ephesians 5:22-25.
 7. In every way, we strongly and firmly support God's pattern for home and family.
- B. What we must not do is to elevate the physical family as the apex of human existence. Family is a good thing—but it is not the ultimate thing. To make it so is to harm the spiritual family!
 1. Your congregation may have single parent homes. Some are divorced, or widowed, the orphaned. None of these fit the model of the traditional family.
 2. When churches make mothers the center of attention on Mother's Day, some dear sisters sit in silence and sorrow over the pain of infertility or an estranged relationship. What does this do to those who will never marry or bear children? Are they second or third class?
 3. Though unintentional, the pain that is caused is great. It is wonderful to celebrate motherhood, but only with sensitivity and thoughtfulness.
- C. Motherhood, fatherhood and family hood are all good—but they are not the ultimate good!

II. **Completeness: Not Found in The Nuclear Family, But in Christ.**

- A. Many saints have been led to believe they will never be whole until they find a mate and have children. When that model is treated as the end-all and be-all in churches, it produces pain.
 - 1. It tempts singles to believe they will be lacking till they find that “special someone.” The feeling of incompleteness may rush them into a relationship with someone harmful to them.
 - 2. It is not marital status that defines us as Christians—it is our redemptive status.
- B. Scripture declares the completeness of the redeemed in Colossians 2:10. It is in Christ!
 - 1. Note the context in verses 6-9. We have received Him. We walk in Him. We are rooted and built up in Him. Established in the faith. Abounding with thanksgiving. Note particularly verse eight: “Don’t let anyone cheat you!” Allow no philosophy or tradition to undermine your faith!
 - 2. Where did the philosophy come from that says the single life is an unfulfilled life? Being single is a high and honored calling, one shared by Jesus and by the apostle who wrote “We are complete in Him.” Paul also wrote that we are “accepted” in Him, Ephesians 1:6-7.
 - 3. Note what Jesus said in Matthew 12:46-50. He does not say “like My mother...” but “are.” Hear His teaching, Mark 10:28-30. He says, “You have a better family!” This is the ultimate.
- C. There is further fallout from “idolizing” the perfect nuclear family.
 - 1. Those in painful marriages often find little fulfillment in life because they define themselves by the quality of their marriage rather than by their relationship to Jesus Christ. They find themselves wanting out of marriage, when God has called them to remain in that marriage.
 - 2. The actual fact is this: the more tightly we cling to Jesus, the tighter our marriages will be.
 - 3. But when marriage is more important than Jesus—and it is for many—the result is irritation...hurt...anger...grudge ...hatred...refusal to forgive...a visit to the lawyer!
 - 4. Jesus is your Savior. Don’t demand that your spouse be that—that you can only find joy and fulfillment if your spouse becomes your Jesus and completes you! You are complete in Jesus. Failure is certain when one sinner demands that another sinner be the Savior.

III. **The Family of God: The Only Permanent, Enduring Family.**

- A. At best, the physical family is only a temporary arrangement. See Matthew 22:23-30. Even our relationship with our children is passing. We must release them as adults into God’s hands.
- B. We need to re-educate ourselves and modify our thinking to accept the truth: There is but one marriage—one family—that endures, Ephesians 5:25-27.
- C. The Bible uses many figures to describe Jesus and His people. Jesus is the everlasting bridegroom; the church is His everlasting bride. In another figure, He is the elder brother over the family of God; we are that family, Hebrews 3:5-6. “House” equals “family.”
- D. In the Day of Eternity, we will ask: “Why did we ever think anything was more important than our relationship with Jesus and with His spiritual family?”

Conclusion:

- 1. It is from Jesus and His (my) spiritual family that I draw comfort, emotional nourishment and life. Jesus and His family are a source of companionship, fellowship, encouragement and love.
- 2. We are family. Any who want to go to heaven can be part of this family with full rights and acceptance.