

Understanding the Nature of Our Relationships (The Family Covenant)

Definition of the family covenant:

The covenant of the family was ordained by God to be the foundational institution of society upon which all other institutions and social groups are built. The family is constituted by marriage and is composed of people who are related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Like all covenants, the family covenant involves shared duties, responsibilities, and blessings.

According to God's design, the family structure is hierarchical, wherein the father is the head of the household and the children are under the care of and subject to the authority of both parents. The family has been given the duties of welfare, education, and discipline. The family therefore has the primary authority (sovereignty) in these areas.

In addition to being the foundation of society, the family is an ordinary vehicle for the propagation of the Christian faith and the ordinary means for the training and inculturation of future Christians.

1. Marriage constitutes a new family covenant (Genesis 2:24)

- a. Leave (forsake) and Cleave (be joined to)

- b. Exchange the old structure of authority, protection, provision, and allegiance for a new one.
 - i. The pattern established at creation indicates that the relationship between parents and children is covenantal, and this fundamentally changes when a new marriage covenant is established.

 - ii. There is nothing to "forsake" if the children aren't in covenant with their parents preceding marriage

2. The structure of the covenant household (Colossians 3:18-21)

- a. The father as the head (Ephesians 5:22-23, 1 Tim 3:4-5)
 - i. Providing, protecting, blessing, leading – taking ultimate responsibility for the members of the household

- b. The mother as co-laborer and domestic CEO (Titus 2:3-5)

- c. The parents teaching, disciplining, and enculturating the children in the faith (Eph 6:1-4)

- d. The children honoring their parents by submitting to their discipline and instruction (Eph 6:1-3)

3. The covenant duties of parents

- a. Basic provision of food, clothing, etc. (1 Tim 5:8, Proverbs 31:15)
- b. The exercise of authority (Gen 18:19, Psalm 78:4-7)
- c. Propagate the faith/ Assimilate your children into the faith (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)
 - i. Training/ Instruction (Proverbs 22:6. Proverbs 1:8-9)
 - ii. Discipline/ Correction (Proverbs 19:18, 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14; Hebrews 12:4-11)
 - iii. Enculturate your children with a Christian “Paideia & Nouthesia” (Ephesians 6:1-4)
 - “Bring up” = *ektrepho*: nourish, feed, bring to maturity “in the Lord”
 - “Nurture” = *Paideia*: training, instruction, discipline (comprehensive upbringing) “In the Lord”
 - “Admonition”= *Nouthesia*: warning, counsel, positive pressure “in the Lord”

4. The covenant duties of children

- a. Honor your parents (Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:1-2)
- b. The duties that correspond to parental duties
- c. Serve, help, and care for your parents as needed, even after you are married (Mark 7:5-9, Proverbs 127:3-5)