

Chapter Six: The Natural Family and the Culture of Life

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

As we have seen, the “gay” vision of a society with no restrictions on sexual conduct is an immature and self-centered fantasy. It promotes behavior that is non-procreative and associated with disease, addictions, psychopathology, abortion and shortened life span, in short, a “culture of death.”

In contrast, the Christian vision for a family-centered society creates a “culture of life“ by promoting responsible procreation and raising of children, caring for family members, and financial responsibility. Such a society offers health, longevity, stability, security and prosperity to its members. But only persuasive advocacy and perseverance will make our vision a reality. Christians must compete effectively with our opponents so that our vision and not theirs will prevail. But our focus must be on achieving our vision, not defeating theirs. It’s an important difference. We could stop “gay” marriage, for example, and still have a disintegrating society full of broken families and perversion. We must therefore be aggressively and pro-actively pro-family.

What does it mean to be pro-family?

- Pro-family is not defined by what it is against, though pro-family people are very much against movements and institutions that undermine the security of family life..
- Pro-family means championing the natural family as God designed it: a man and a woman and their children, secured and sanctified by the covenant of marriage.
- Pro-family means not just acknowledging the importance of the family as an institution, but committing to ensure, by every honorable means, its cultural primacy.
- Pro-family means promoting abstinence until marriage, faithfulness within marriage, and parents’ devotion to their children.

Following is a brief summary of the Christian perspective on family and human sexuality, stated in secular terms. These are the presuppositions of the pro-family movement.

1. The natural family, consisting of one man and one woman and their children by birth or adoption, is the foundation of civilization. This truth is acknowledged either expressly or implicitly by most nations, cultures and major religions throughout recorded history.
2. Heterosexuality is the common design of all physically normal human beings. We are each either male or female with a reproductive system that is perfectly complimentary to that of the opposite sex. There is no “third gender.”
3. Human sexual desire originates in and derives from one’s reproductive physiology and thus all human sexuality is innately based in heterosexuality.
4. The sexual impulse is one of the most powerful forces in human life. It can be either powerfully creative or destructive. The institution of marriage constructively contains and directs this power.
5. Marriage is the social and religious institution designed to harness the power of the sex drive for procreation and enrichment of life and to prevent its potential harm to individuals, families and societies. Without marriage, natural families are prone to instability and breakdown because men and women are more easily lured away from their families into other sexual relationships. Sexual infidelity and promiscuity lead to broken families, the spread of sexual diseases, greater poverty for women and children, and emotional trauma among family members leading in some cases to violence and even murder and/or suicide.
6. Broken or single-parent families are more likely to produce emotionally damaged children, who in turn are less successful in forming their own families and more likely to fall into pathological or anti-social behavior patterns: violence, drug and alcohol addiction, criminal behavior, failure to succeed in school, suicide and mental health problems.
7. A marriage-based society that encourages its people to abstain from sex until marriage and to stay faithful to their spouses within marriage reaps the benefit of greater family stability and fewer social problems. Experience and research confirm that respecting the design of the natural family produces positive results while rejection of the design produces negative results.

What is the Natural Family?

The natural family starts with the core relationship of one man and one woman. This relationship is “natural” because it is based on the *natural design* of human beings.

The relationship is also “supernatural” because it was created and sanctified (set apart) by God. In Genesis 1:27, we are told that “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

The image of God imprinted upon us is intimately linked to the dual-gender composition of our species. In addition, the institution of marriage itself is also given directly by God. After each

segment of the creation, starting with the third day, God observes that it is “good,” and finally after the sixth day, that it is “very good.” However, in the detailed account of the creation of Adam, God states that “it is *not good* for the man to be alone [emphasis ours],” after which he immediately says, “I will make him a helper suitable for him,” and goes on to create Eve from Adam’s own body. The division of one into two is closely followed by the re-joining of the two into one: For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Gen.2:24)

Adam calls Eve a “wife” in his very first reference to her, and God calls her a wife at her creation (Gen. 2:22), acknowledging the preexistence of the marriage relationship. In at least one sense, this relationship is the manifestation of the *image of God* mentioned in verse 1:27; God the Three-in-One is a relationship within Himself. It is also true that the Christian marriage, a covenant with God, is really a 3-person relationship, with God as its sanctifying and central person. There are also social dimensions to God’s sanctification of marriage; by setting marriage apart for His own jurisdiction, God makes the sexual relationship safe and permanent for both partners. Thus, human sexuality, the powerful force that causes much human misery outside marriage (unwed pregnancy, STDs, rape, child molestation, prostitution, porn addiction, etc.), is tamed and given a highly beneficial role (the blessing of children, lifelong mutual pleasure and nurture for the husband and wife, etc.) within the marriage covenant.

1. Men and women are physically different.

This truth is so blatantly self-evident that it is not stated in this way in the Bible. Yet it is an underlying assumption for all the cases in which God deals differently with men and women. For example, Peter’s instructions to men in the marriage relationship stresses that for all areas of their marriage that might have physical dimensions (shared tasks, anger, physical cycles or sickness, etc.), men must “...live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman” (1 Peter 3: 7).

This difference is inborn and clearly seen in their genetic makeup (DNA), and is obviously connected to reproducing the species. In addition to the external sexual difference, a woman’s organs and systems are specially designed for pregnancy, birth and nursing. While not directly related to reproduction, the physical strength and size of the man allow him to provide the needed life support and protection for the members of his family while the woman undergoes pregnancy and birth, and later while she nurses and physically cares for babies and small children.

The “curse” which God pronounces for Eve centers upon her child-bearing role: “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children...’” (Genesis 3:16). But the “curse” which God pronounces for Adam centers upon his role as laborer/provider: “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread...” (Genesis 3: 16-19). Thus God acknowledges the dual roles of mankind in its two complementary forms, tailoring the curse to their different physical natures and the functions which arise from them.

2. Men and women are psychologically different.

The psychological differences between men and women are (and always have been) generally acknowledged by people of all cultures. These differences tend to be *complementary*, that is, they allow a man and a woman to contribute, equally but differently, to the accomplishment of family tasks such as child training.

Though the psychological differences between men and women are nowhere described by God, we can see them in the creation. Adam is placed in the garden of Eden right after he becomes a living soul (Genesis 2:7-8), and is appointed to “cultivate it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15). His role is an active, goal-directed one and he performs it alone. Yet God makes him aware of his incomplete condition so that he will be prepared for relationship to another human being. “The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:20).

When Eve is created, she is created *in relationship*: in addition to emerging from Adam’s physical being, she is called the Hebrew word commonly used for “wife” (*ishshah*), and is instantly recognized by Adam as being intimately identified with him and being the chosen “other” of his permanent relationship (Genesis 2:24). In this scene the Bible portrays two of the important psychological specializations of the different genders: the relational skills of women and the goal/action-pursuing skills of men.

Parent/Child: The Natural Extension of the Core Relationship

This grouping is “natural” because children are the natural result of the social/sexual joining of a man and a woman (marriage). God promotes the reproductive function of the entire creation, and of humans specifically, throughout the Bible, beginning with His first blessing/command, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:22, 28). In addition, He frequently refers to children as a blessing:

Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them...(Psalm 127:3-5).

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD (Psalm 128:3-4).

The ability to produce and care for children is part of the physical/psychological design of the man and the woman. God acknowledges the natural ability and inclination of a parent to take care of her/his own biological child:

Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you (Isaiah 49:15).

Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? (Matthew 7:9-10).

While drawing attention to the different kinds of care which mothers and fathers often provide, God also recognizes the equal status and importance of each parent. In both the Old and New Testaments, He refers to parents as “father and mother” much more often than He calls them by the more generic term “parents.”

Human babies are born very helpless compared to other species: it takes a minimum of 3 years for the human child to become mature enough to be at all independent of his parents. Thus human parents have a long time to train and influence their children. God identifies this helpless state of human offspring in his use of the term “fatherless,” a general reference to the imperiled state of children deprived of a parent/protector/provider. Old Testament law specified the means of caring for such children and made this care a moral duty for the members of a Jewish community. God also identifies Himself as the ultimate and faithful source of their care: “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling” (Psalm 68:5).

Many social and survival skills must be learned by a dependent child if he/she is to function as a member of a human community. The child is taught by parents, but even more importantly, learns by watching *two very different* parents interact in complex ways. Some of the most important skills a child learns from watching mother and father interact (using their different attitudes and abilities) are:

- Task sharing
- Reliance on each other
- Unselfishness
- Resource sharing
- Responsibility
- Commitment
- Self-control
- Nurturing

What the Natural Family Teaches

Task sharing

Children have many opportunities to watch their mothers and fathers cooperating on tasks that require their differing skills and perspectives. One of the most clear-cut examples is infant care. While many tasks (diapering, dressing, comforting) can be performed equally by either parent, mothers are indispensable for breast-feeding (!) and often play the main part in teaching language. Dads are often the teachers of play and risk-taking. Even among the tasks that can be performed by either parent, a man and woman often “specialize,” choosing some tasks and relinquishing others.

Task sharing is seen by the child as an outgrowth of the 2 different parents' shared commitment to their child and each other, and their willingness to bring their unique talents and interests to bear in doing the best job possible of raising their child.

The Christian principle which underlies the concept of task sharing is unity, both the one-flesh unity of the marriage bond and the unity of the body of Christ. God gives us an excellent picture of this principle of diversity of function and unity of purpose at work in the church: "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ" (I Corinthians 12:2). There is also the nature of God Himself to consider: in the Trinity, the three separate Persons function differently, even though they are One.

Mutual reliance

When the child observes task sharing, he/she also sees that each parent relies on the other to do their part. The child also witnesses mutual reliance in times of stress, such as emergencies or times of grief or sickness. The child sees that each parent is willing to rely on the other, and also to be relied on, even though neither parent has any real *control* of the other (as, for example, an employer would have over an employee). The child learns that it is possible to place trust in a person because of that person's free-will commitment to be relied upon.

Unselfishness

Children constantly see examples of one parent giving up personal claims, interests or wishes in favor of the other parent. Often, for example, one parent will volunteer to take over the other's child care responsibilities so that the other parent can participate in a special event. The child sees that each parent understands and empathizes with the needs of the other, even though those needs may be quite different. The child also sees both parents denying themselves various things in order to care for their children.

The Bible gives us a perfect pattern for unselfishness in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (I John 3:16).

Resource sharing

In every family there are resources (money, time, use of car, etc.) that have to be shared. Parents both encourage a child to share and, together, model sharing for him/her. The parents demonstrate an especially profound kind of sharing -- sharing of their feelings, plans, dreams, trials and successes -- in short, sharing a life together, even though the child sees that they are two very different kinds of person.

The Christian teaching of sharing extends from the family to the community, as in this famous example from the first community of believers in Jerusalem:

For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apos-

les' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need (Acts 4:34-35).

Responsibility

Responsibility is the “flip side” of mutual reliance; when one parent has taken on a task or role in the family, he/she performs it faithfully and does the best job possible. Parents teach and expect a child to be responsible in things like chores and homework, and they also teach a child to use personal talents and skills on a task, and to take personal pride in its accomplishment.

Commitment

Commitment is a person’s determination to stick with something or someone despite unfavorable circumstances or temptations to defect. The foundation of the natural family is the marriage contract – a lifetime commitment between a man and a woman, having legal, social and spiritual status. This commitment is willingly entered into without any knowledge of what the future will bring. From the parents’ commitment to each other flows their commitment to their children. Children, in turn, learn to commit to their family (and later to other people, projects, groups, etc.) as the source of their security and nurture and the object of their affection and loyalty.

The Biblical concept of commitment in marriage is contained within the prophetic exclamation of Adam on seeing Eve for the first time, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:25). The idea is one of permanent attachment, perhaps even better expressed by the King James translation “cleave unto” instead of “be joined to.”

The idea has its main embodiment, however, in the character of the Deity. God is the covenant maker who will never turn from His commitment to us: “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself” (II Timothy 2:13).

Self-control

In order for a family to thrive, the marriage partners must use self-control in dealing with the inevitable conflicts that arise between men and women with their differing physical needs, relationship styles, life cycles, etc. Because children are very sensitive to conflict, they easily see that their sense of security depends on their parents’ ability to manage conflict with self-control. Paul illustrates the crucial role of this character quality by describing what a future society would be like without it:

“For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (II Timothy 3:2-4).

We are beginning to see the devastation wrought by family violence and its society-wide

counterpart as self-control is increasingly devalued in our culture.

Nurture

A child learns this important skill from being nurtured in different ways by father and mother. He/she also sees them nurturing each other in ways that are shaped by each other's different needs. Practically all of a person's nurturing skills are learned in childhood, and these form a vital part of that person's later ability to nurture children, spouse and aging parents. These skills are also the ones required for helping people outside the family who require nurture, for example, elderly neighbors, emergency victims, children without families or clients in professions which require care giving. Paul talks about this model in his own ministry to the Thessalonians: "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children" (I Thessalonians 2:7).

In one of Isaiah's prophecies about His ministry on earth, Jesus provides the model of the nurturing pastor, a model which serves as the ideological foundation of many of our own society's social services: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11).

What Does the Non-Natural "Family" Teach?

Having explored the logic of God's design for monogamous heterosexual marriage as the foundation of the natural family and the vehicle for developing essential character qualities in its members, we will turn briefly to the other intimate social groupings that have been styled as "families" by those who challenge the Biblical model. These are, to name only the most commonly recognized, cohabiting heterosexual couples without children and those with children from previous relationships, same-sex couples without children and those with children by adoption or from previous relationships, and single persons (usually women) who have borne or adopted children without intending to or being able to raise them with any co-parent. Statistics show that these groupings have one thing in common: brevity. In comparison to marriage-based families, even in a society with a high divorce rate, such groupings are short-term (1, 2, see footnotes below).

Homosexual couples, in addition to having the shortest relationship duration (a number of studies in different "gay-affirming" societies show about two years for men, several months less for women) also are not usually monogamous. Members of these "alternative families" learn the lessons of non-commitment: broken promises, failed relationships and low expectations. Though there is often a high degree of commitment between parent and child in single-parent families, the psychological "hole" left by the missing parent, and the child's identification with the abandoned or abandoning parent, still speak volumes about the elements of trust and commitment in relationships, particularly those with the opposite sex. Widowed families are generally the exception to this rule, since the commitment of the missing parent is not called into question, and the positive feelings of the remaining members serve to give that parent a continuing presence in the family.

Self-control is another element often missing from "alternative family" groupings. Research shows that cohabiting heterosexual and homosexual couples have a much higher rate of domestic violence than married couples (3, 4) and that homosexuals have a higher rate of inter-partner

violence than heterosexuals (4,5,6,7). Statistics also show that children of violent relationships tend to repeat the violent behavior as adults (8).

Selfishness is an integral element of non-committed relationships, and especially of homosexual relationships, which tend to be non-monogamous and also based on each partner's need to exploit the other to "complete" his or her deficient gender identity: Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, a therapist for men seeking to escape homosexuality, describes this attempt at need-fulfillment: "Same-sex attractions will then substitute for the lost masculine within" (9).

As for the remaining character qualities, it is apparent that they are better modeled by two committed individuals of opposite genders, since this is the configuration that allows each partner to apply the greatest amount of effort and inner resources to cooperate with the other partner, whose different gender poses problems in understanding, sharing of perspective and coordinating of gender-specific roles and abilities. The commitment element is especially important here, since it allows all the family members to observe how problems and challenges are worked through, and adjustments fine-tuned, over a long period of time.

1. *More about unmarried different-sex couples*, paragraph citing research from several sources on the Alternatives to Marriage website, <http://www.unmarried.org/statistics.html>.
2. <http://www.acped.org/?CONTEXT=art&cat=22&art=50>.
3. Roger Sider, M.D., "Living Together Risky for Young Women and Children," *Grand Rapids Press* January 25, 1999, reproduced in the Divorce Statistics Collection of the website <http://www.divorcereform.org/mel/adomesticviolence.html>
4. *2004 General Social Survey*, Statistics Canada, Canada's National Statistical Agency, July 7, 2005.
5. "A Descriptive Analysis of Same-Sex Relationship Violence for a Diverse Sample," *The Journal of Family Violence*, Publisher Springer Netherlands, Volume 15, Number 3, September, 2000, Pages 281-293. ISSN 0885-7482
6. Greenwood, G., Relf, M., Huang, B., Pollack, L., Canchola, J., and Catania, J. (2002). "Battering victimization among a probability-based sample of men who have sex with men," *Amer. J. Pub. Health*, 92: (12), 1964-69.
7. Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N., Allison, C. (1999). "Comparing violence over the life span in samples of same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitants," *Violence and Victims*, 14(4): 413-425.
8. *Research on children who suffer family violence: from CAEPV*, article summarizing recent research, on http://www.silentwitness.net/sub/latest_research.htm#children.
9. Nicolosi, Joseph, Ph.D., "The Meaning of Same-Sex Attraction," 2008, reproduced in the Documents section of the NARTH website, <http://www.narth.com>.