



What Life Bridge
Believes about the

family



*“The strength of a nation lies in the homes
of its people.” -Abraham Lincoln*

PREFACE

It is our conviction that the family is the backbone of the Christian church and of society as a whole. History shows that, for any society to survive, it must uphold, strengthen, and continue to build upon the biblical institutions of marriage and family.

The Bible begins in Genesis with the marriage of a man and a woman and ends in the book of Revelation with the marriage of Christ and His bride, the Church. In between, God has given us a set of blueprints for family life, which, if followed in a spirit of humility and obedience, provide us with the only true way to maintain healthy family relationships.

The following document affirms this biblical model and challenges us to consider how we should live within the walls of our own homes. It is offered in a spirit of love and humility, not of judgment or contention. Furthermore, it is not intended to be a comprehensive doctrinal statement about what the Bible says regarding marriage, family, and related subjects.

It is our hope that this document will serve to accurately represent the truth God has revealed to us in Scripture, will provide insight into what a biblical family looks like, and will show how we can honor and glorify Him in our family relationships.

We freely acknowledge that we, like all people, have often denied the biblical truths of family life by the way we live. We desire, however, to live by God’s grace in accordance with the principles stated herein and to pass these principles on to future generations so that He will be honored and glorified as our families reflect His character.

THE BIBLE

We believe the Bible was written by men who were divinely inspired by God the Holy Spirit, and we believe it to be authoritative and errorless in its original autographs. We believe the Bible contains the blueprints for building solid marriage and family relationships. It teaches principles for marriage and family life that transcend time and culture. We are committed to communicating biblical truth in order to strengthen and give direction to a marriage and family.

2 Timothy 3:16-21; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Psalm 22

FAMILY

We believe God is the originator of the family. God established it in His inaugural act of the marriage between a man and a woman. Further, the Bible indicates that children are an extension of the family and are to be received as a blessing from the Lord. Therefore, we believe the purpose of the family is to glorify and honor God by forming the spiritual, emotional, physical, and economic foundation for individuals, the church, and any society.

It is at home that children see manhood and womanhood modeled. It is at home that moral values are taught by parents and placed into the hearts of their children. It is at home that people see the reality of a relationship with Jesus Christ modeled. It is at home that people learn to live out their convictions. Therefore, we are committed to upholding the concept of family as God's original and primary means of producing a godly offspring and passing on godly values from generation to generation.

We recognize that God does not call everyone into marriage. According to His will, some will remain single for life and have the unique opportunity to serve God without the responsibilities of spouse and children.

Genesis 1:26-28; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:5-7;
John 1:12; Romans 8:15, 23; 1 Corinthians 7:25-27;
Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 3:14-15

MARRIAGE

We believe God, not man, created marriage. We believe marriage was the first institution designed by God. We believe the Bible teaches that the covenant of marriage is sacred and lifelong. The Bible makes it clear that marriage is a legally binding, public declaration of commitment and a private consummation between one man and one woman, never between the same sex. Therefore, we believe God gives a wife to a husband, and a husband to a wife, and they are to receive one another as God's unique and personal provision to help meet their mutual needs.

We believe God created marriage for the purpose of couples glorifying God as one flesh, providing companionship, partnering together in the work of God's kingdom, parenting godly children, and enjoying sexual pleasure. Just as the Trinity reflects equal worth, with differing roles, we believe God created a man and a woman with equal worth but with differing roles and responsibilities in marriage.

Finally, we declare that the marriage commitment must be upheld in our culture as that sacred institution of God in which men and women can experience the truest sense of spiritual, emotional, and physical intimacy, so that the two can become one.

Genesis 2:18-25; Deuteronomy 24:5; Proverbs 27:17;
Song of Solomon; Matthew 19:4-6, 22:30;
Mark 10:6-9, 12:25; Romans 1:26-27, 8:29;
1 Corinthians 7:3; Ephesians 5:30-32; Hebrews 13:4

HUSBANDS

We believe God has charged each husband to fulfill the responsibility of being the “head” (servant leader) of his wife. We believe God created a man incomplete, and as a husband, he needs his wife as his helper. We believe a husband will give account to God for how he has loved, served and provided for his wife.

We reject the notion that a husband is to dominate his wife. Likewise, we reject the notion that a husband is to abdicate his responsibilities to lead his wife and family. Rather, we believe his responsibility is to love his wife. This love is characterized by taking the initiative to serve her, care for her, and honor her as a gift from God. We believe his responsibility is to protect his wife and help provide for her physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

We also believe a husband is to seek after and highly regard his wife’s opinion and counsel and treat her as the equal partner she is in Christ. Therefore, we are committed to exhort and implore men not to abuse their God-given responsibilities as husbands, but rather to initiate a sacrificial love for their wives, in the same way Jesus Christ initiated sacrificial love and demonstrated it fully on the cross.

Genesis 2:18-25; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 Timothy 5:8

WIVES

We believe God has charged each wife to fulfill the responsibility of being her husband’s “helper.” We believe a wife will give account to God for how she has loved, respected, and given support to her husband. We uphold the biblical truth that she is of equal value with her husband before God.

We reject the notion that a wife should assume the leadership responsibilities of her husband. Likewise, we reject the notion that a wife should passively defer to the dominance of her husband. We believe that her responsibility is to willingly, wisely, and lovingly, exhort, encourage, respect, and submit to her husband as the leader in the relationship. Therefore, we are committed to exhorting a wife to be in support of her husband by accepting and excelling in her responsibility as his helper.

Genesis 2:18-25; Proverbs 31:10-12; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18;
1 Peter 3:1-6

SEXUAL UNION

We believe the Bible clearly states that marriage is the only acceptable context for sexual intimacy. Our culture has rejected God's plan for intimacy by promoting sexual promiscuity of various kinds and, as a consequence, has brought upon itself sexual diseases and relational dysfunctions. We believe in sexual purity and marital fidelity.

Therefore, we are committed to training parents to continually teach their children, from an early age, to respect their sexuality and to preserve their virginity and purity until marriage. We are committed to communicating the message to teenagers, single adults, and married couples that sexual intimacy is available only in the context of marriage.

Genesis 1:24-25; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

FATHERS

We believe God has charged a father to carry out the responsibilities of a family leader. He is accountable before God to lead his family by sacrificially loving his wife and children and by providing for their physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. We believe the greatest way a father can love his children is to love their mother. We believe children gain much of their concept of God from their fathers. We believe a father should teach his children, by instruction and example, truth from the Bible and how to apply it practically in daily life. Therefore, a father should spend a quantity of time, as well as quality time, with each child.

We believe a father should demonstrate godly character revealed in humility, tenderness, and patience toward his children. We believe a father should demonstrate love by practicing consistent discipline with each child. Therefore, we are committed to turning the hearts of fathers back to their children by emphasizing the importance of their role as "father." We are committed to exhorting every father to model a love for God and His Word, to model love for his wife, and to love his children.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Malachi 4:6; Ephesians 6:4;
Colossians 3:20-21; 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 5:8

MOTHERS

We believe God has uniquely designed women to be mothers. We believe the greatest way a mother can love her children is to love their father.

We also believe God has created a woman with an innate and special ability to nurture and care for her children. Therefore, we believe mothers are the primary people who execute the vital responsibilities of loving and nurturing children. We believe these responsibilities should be met before a mother contemplates any other duties. We believe our culture has devalued the role of a mother by placing greater significance on activities outside the home than on those inside the home.

We realize there are cases when the mother wishes to work outside the home and that both the husband and wife agree on this. However, this can put stress on the family and make it difficult for the mother to carry out her role as nurturer. Therefore, we are committed to presenting a biblical framework through which couples can rightly evaluate their priorities in light of a mother's role. We are committed to elevating motherhood by rightly assessing its exalted value in God's economy of the family. We are committed to exhorting mothers to model love for God and His Word, to model love for her husband, and to love and nurture her children.

Deuteronomy 6:6, 11:19; Proverbs 14:1, 31:1-31; Ezekiel 16:44-45;
1 Thessalonians 2:7; Titus 2:4-5

CHILDLESS COUPLES

We believe couples without children are of no less value before God than those with children. We believe God has allowed some couples to be without biological children according to His sovereign plan in their lives. We believe in encouraging childless couples to consider adoption, as the Lord leads. We are committed to encouraging childless couples to pass on a godly legacy through involvement with children in their immediate families, churches and communities.

Luke 1:6-7; Romans 8:28-29

CHILDREN

We believe children are gifts of God and should be received and treated as such. We believe a child's life begins at conception, and that all unborn human life is worthy of protection under the law and should not be destroyed through abortion. We believe children have a special responsibility to God in obeying and honoring their parents. We believe a child's identity and spiritual growth is either helped or hindered by his parents' devotion to God, to one another, and to them. Parents should be working to build strong character in the lives of their children through consistent godly living, nurturing, discipline, and teaching them right from wrong. We are committed to God's plan for passing His love down through the ages by encouraging parents to love their children "so the generations to come might know" the love and forgiveness of Christ.

Job 3:3; Psalm 78:5-8, 127:3-6, 139:13-16;
Proverbs 4:1, 6:20; Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20

GRANDPARENTS

We believe grandparents are to be honored as valued family members. We believe their wisdom should be sought and passed on to their children and their children's children. We also believe that grandparents have the responsibility to teach and model for their grandchildren what it means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ and to pass along biblical principles for godly living.

Therefore, we are committed to giving honor to grandparents by encouraging their children and grandchildren to listen to their voices of wisdom. We are also committed to exhorting grandparents to pray for and become actively involved with children and grandchildren whenever it is possible.

Genesis 18:18-19; Psalm 78; Proverbs 17:6; 1 Timothy 5:4

CHURCH

We believe the family and the church are interdependent. A primary responsibility of the church is to help build godly families, and godly families also help build the church. We also believe that the church can be like a family to those who are single. Therefore, we believe the family supplies the relational rudiments of the local church. We believe the local church is the spiritual home where families should corporately worship God. It is a place where the knowledge and love of God may be communicated to fathers, mothers, and children.

Therefore, we are committed to exhorting families to support the local church through their involvement. We are also committed to exhorting our church to uphold the priority of helping build godly marriages and families.

Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 4:15; 1 Timothy 3:15; Philemon 1:2

SINGLE PARENTS

We believe that, ideally, a child benefits most from the influence of both a father and mother for healthy development in life and relationships. At the same time, we recognize that God's grace is sufficient and that He is a father to the fatherless and a husband to the husbandless. We also believe He is a guardian to children without a mother and a friend to a husband who has lost his wife.

We believe God, by His grace, can fill the void left from a missing parent to accomplish His eternal purposes of building Christ-like character in single parents and their children. We believe a single parent and his or her children are a family and that the Bible contains principles for them to grow as a family. We believe our church should be a home for single parents, providing their children with godly people who serve as role models.

Therefore, we are committed to exhorting Christians within our church to creatively help meet the needs associated with single-parent homes. We are committed to comforting and encouraging single-parent families by providing resources and developing biblical principles to assist those who struggle in the role of a single parent.

Psalms 68:5-6; Luke 18:3-5; Romans 8:28-29;
1 Corinthians 7:32; 1 Timothy 5:3-16; James 1:27

DIVORCE, RECONCILIATION AND REMARRIAGE

We believe God's plan for marriage is that it be a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. We believe God hates divorce. We believe divorce brings harm to every person involved. Therefore, reconciliation of a marriage should be encouraged and divorce discouraged. We also believe that God allows for divorce in certain situations, not because He wills it, but because of the hardness of people's hearts. We believe the Bible teaches that God allows for divorce in the case of adultery and in the case where an unbelieving spouse has chosen to abandon the commitment of marriage.

We believe, however, that it is God's priority that marital oneness be restored and that, through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, forgiveness and reconciliation can be experienced. We believe that in the unfortunate cases of abuse and abandonment, God has provided protection for an abused spouse and provision for child support through the church, civil law, godly counselors, prayer and other practical measures. We believe God can restore broken people and broken marriages by His grace, by the power of His Spirit, and by His practical truths found in the Bible. We also believe that remarriage is biblically permissible under certain circumstances.

Malachi 2:16; Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Luke 16:18;
Romans 7:1-3, 13:1-5; 1 Corinthians 7:15

BROKEN FAMILIES

We believe God has allowed men and women, either by circumstance or by choice, to endure difficult and painful consequences in their marriages and family relationships. We also believe God gives abundant grace to broken families.

Therefore, we believe He can and does enable them to carry out His functions and principles for healthy family life. We are committed to comforting, encouraging, and teaching these families God's principles of marriage and family life. We are also committed to exhorting the local church to help with the burden of the broken family.

James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:16; Philippians 4:13

WORK & THE FAMILY

We believe work is an important and necessary aspect of one's service to God and one's responsibility to provide for the needs of the family. We also believe security and significance cannot be found through pursuing career goals or financial achievement apart from one's responsibility to God and one's spouse and family. Instead, we believe those needs are best met in the warmth of a home where parents and children are experiencing harmony in their relationships with each other and with Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are committed to challenging any person or couple to rearrange their priorities so that over the course of a lifetime they can be successful at home and not merely successful in their careers.

Revelation 3:14-22; Ephesians 6:7-8; Matthew 6:33;
1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12

MARRIAGE EDUCATION

We believe single adults who choose to marry should be taught the biblical principles of marriage. We also believe the education of a married couple does not end after the wedding ceremony is over, but continues throughout life.

Therefore, we believe that both premarital and post-marital education is helpful and essential in a couple's growth toward and in oneness. We are committed to elevating, establishing, and teaching the precepts of marriage by which single adults can rightly evaluate their relationships and equip themselves for marriage. We are committed to providing the teaching and training necessary to equip married couples to live a lifetime together as one. Finally, we are committed to showing couples how their marriages can be used by God to give others the hope found only in Jesus Christ.

Titus 2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Acts 16:31-34; John 4:53

MENTORS

We believe in the biblical admonition for older men and women to teach younger men and women. We believe younger couples should seek out older couples for their wisdom and counsel in matters of marriage and family. We believe older couples should be taught and encouraged to mentor younger couples and we believe this is best accomplished through the local church.

Titus 2:3-5

THE DECEIVER AND CULTURE

We believe there is a living Devil who is God's enemy and whose nature and objective is to lie and deceive. We believe the Devil has attacked God's plan for the family from the beginning of man until now. We believe he uses the various aspects of the culture to promote personal independence, distort the differences between men and women, confuse their roles, and elevate personal rights over marital responsibilities. We believe the Devil seeks to persuade people to move away from God's plan for intimacy and oneness and toward isolation and divorce.

John 8:44; Genesis 3; Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-18;
1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:12; 1 John 2:15

GOD—THE CREATOR OF FAMILY

Father

We believe in the Fatherhood of God. The title "Father" implies that God is a relational being. The Bible reveals God has four primary relationships as Father: He is the Father of creation, of the nations, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of all believers. We believe the Bible presents the title "Father" as one of the primary names Christians should use in addressing and relating to God. In doing so, Christians identify themselves as children who belong to the family of God. We are committed to proclaiming and demonstrating this truth about who God is and who we are, so that God will be glorified, and that He might use us to bring others into His family through a personal relationship with His Son.

John 1:12; Exodus 3:14-15; Ephesians 3:16; Matthew 6:9; Romans 8:15;
Acts 17:24-28

Son

We believe God the Son, fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, was God's final sacrifice for the sins of man through the shedding of His blood on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. We believe He is the only way to know God the Father and to experience His plan for marriage and family. We are committed to introducing people to Jesus Christ in order that, by faith, they might personally receive Him, be born into the family of God, receive forgiveness and eternal life, and begin a relationship with God that is essential in marriage and family life.

John 1:4,12, 17:3; 1 John 2:23-24; Ephesians 2:19-22;
Colossians 1:13-18; Hebrews 1:1-4

Holy Spirit

We believe God the Holy Spirit is the agent and teacher of a godly marriage and family. We believe when Christian couples and their children consistently yield to His control and power, they will experience harmony in their marriages and families. Therefore, we are committed to sharing the ministry of the Holy Spirit with people so they may know God better, make Him known to others, and appropriate His power in fulfilling their duties in marriage and family relationships.

John 14:26, 15:26, 16:5-15; Ephesians 5:18-21

Adapted from Family Life's *The Family Manifesto*.

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