

Trouble in Paradise: Faith in the Family

May 20-21

Introduction/Recap

Aloha! I'm Mark if we haven't met and I want to welcome you to our service. Today we are continuing our brand new series, *Trouble in Paradise*. Throughout this year our theme has been *Heaven*. Specifically as in the Lord's Prayer when Jesus tells His disciples to pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," (Matthew 6:10). So as the Church (or Ekklesia) we've learned that our mission is to heaven-ize the world. Today we'll discover that this mandate was not original to the early disciples but was actually God's plan from the very beginning, going all the way back to the very first family. Did you know that God's vehicle for heaven-izing the world was family? Today we will discover God's original intent for family before there was *Trouble in Paradise*.

As an additional resource to this message I want to encourage you to read a book that was recommended to me by a dear friend, Brennan Kelley called, *Taking Back Your Family* by Jefferson Bethke. This book came at such a critical season of my life and I want to recommend it to you if you want to learn more about a Biblical model for family.

Original Family Mandate

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*So God created mankind in His own image,
in the image of God He created them;
male and female He created them.*

28 *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground," (Genesis 1:27-28).*

In the beginning God created the heavens, and the earth, and then He created people in His own image. Last week we saw that God did this by breathing His very Spirit into the dust that He had formed into a man called Adam. Then He "Split the Adam" and formed two from the one. Then He brought the two back together as one in marriage to image Him to the earth. We saw that this is a reflection of God Himself who is three persons but one being. In the same way husbands and wives are two distinct persons but one being in marriage. So we best image God as we are one. Now look what God commands mankind to do. They are to fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over the living creatures. We get more details in the following chapter,

⁵ *"Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

⁸ *Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there He put the man He had formed. ⁹ The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," (Genesis 2:5-9).*

It sort of reminds me of Sims World. God has this expansive planet that He wants to develop but He begins by planting a small garden in the east and placing a lone worker in it. God knows that this lone worker will never be able to cultivate the planet without help so He creates a suitable helper as we learned last week. So God images Himself in these two tiny individuals and then He commands them to image themselves in more tiny individuals — All who bear God's authority and creativity. The plan is that this unit will partner with God to do to the earth what God did with Eden — to cultivate it, develop it, and unlock its beauty and potential. In other words, this family is instructed to Eden-ize the world! Sound familiar? Here's a powerful truth, God's plan to heaven-ize the world always begins with family. As Ed Silvoso from Transform our World says,

“Establishing a stable and secure home base is foundational to living a transformational lifestyle, for the light that shines the furthest, shines the brightest at home.”

And as Pastor Earl brilliantly stated, *“If it isn't happening at home, don't export it!”*

We have to first contend for heaven in our families, Shalom in the home, before we can heaven-ize the world. But make no mistake, beginning with Adam and Eve, it is the mission of every family to partner with God to heaven-ize the world. We are called to work, to create, to cultivate, to unlock the beauty of this world by creating garden-like heaven spaces. But just as the first family receives their marching orders, there is *Trouble in Paradise*.

Trouble in Paradise

After the fall, sin introduces some major obstacles to “Eden-izing” the world.

¹⁶ *“To the woman He said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”*

¹⁷ *To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’*

“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return,” (Genesis 3:16-19).

So Sims World started on ‘Peaceful-Creative’ mode where Adam and Eve could partner with God to establish an Eden-like paradise all over the world. They had unlimited resources, endless fruit, they had a perfect relationship with God and one another, and access to the tree of life. But after sin, we're now playing in ‘Extreme difficulty’ mode. Having kids is hard and painful, there are power struggles within the family, we have to work hard to produce and provide, and it just seems like life is always against us.

The world has changed, but God's original mandate for family has remained the same. God never gave up on family as the vehicle through which He would heaven-ize His world. Throughout scripture we see God looking for families who will join Him in heaven-izing the world. Like Noah's family and Abraham generations later,

¹⁷ *“I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their*

enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed Me,” (Genesis 22:17-18).

This isn't a new mandate for Abraham's family, it's a continuation of the mandate He gave to the first family. God's vision for our families is to be a blessing to the nations by contending for heaven on earth. This is the mission and calling of every family. Which brings us back to Jesus,

¹⁸ “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,”
(Matthew 22:18-20).

3 Ways to Approach the Mission

So every one of our families has been tasked with heaven-izing the world until Jesus returns. We were created to partner with God and work as a team to contend for the reality of heaven here on earth. Each of our families will do this in a general sense and a specific sense — meaning, the way we do this won't all be identical.

In his book, *Taking Back Your Family*, author Jefferson Bethke identifies three approaches to the mission with two being harmful and only one being healthy.

1. FAMILY AND MISSION

This is where we see what we do for God and the Kingdom separate from what we do at home. There is no integration between home life and kingdom work. Home is simply the place where everyone recharges before going back out to where the “real work” is. The challenge with separating family and mission is that one usually wins and the other usually loses. When there is not a clear sense of mission in the home everyone finds value, purpose, and identity elsewhere (sports, entertainment, academics, etc.)

In the months following my transition to Lead Pastor I noticed a significant uptick in Churchy opportunities. Monthly Pastor Prayer meetings in several communities, substitute teaching and school involvement, multi-congregational initiatives, speaking engagements and so on. Every one of them seemed like a clear ‘God Thing’. But I never really took the time to discern if they were *my* God thing or someone else's. As I continued to give my best to the mission “out there” I had less and less to offer those in my home. I kept telling them we were in a “busy season” but that things would slow down eventually. (After all it was Easter). But even after Easter the opportunities didn't slow down. Soon a busy season turned into busy seasons and I realized I was giving my first and best fruits to the mission but my family was left with crumbs.

This is the problem when every member of the family has their own individual mission and endeavors that don't involve anyone else in the family. When family and mission are separate endeavors one usually wins at the cost of the other. Another way people err is,

2. FAMILY AS MISSION

A common phrase in Church circles is, “Never sacrifice your family on the altar of ministry.” We talked about this in the previous point. But do you think it is also possible to sacrifice the mission on the altar of family? This is where we put family above everything else, even God's calling on our lives. Jesus had stern words of warning to would-be disciples who placed family above the Kingdom. We can also do this as Church family. This is where our congregation or our ministries become so inward focused that we lose sight of the 99 still lost. So both of these approaches are problematic. What is the Kingdom approach to family?

3. FAMILY ON MISSION

This is where a family acknowledges and embraces their God-given mandate to heaven-ize the world together. They acknowledge and embrace the distinct but complimentary ways God has gifted their family in order to fulfill their particular calling to contend for heaven on earth. The emphasis of this family is not individual expression or personal fulfillment but teamwork and mission fulfillment. Families on mission do not have to compete with one another to walk in their calling but each member sacrifices for the greater good. When family and mission are two separate things you can either view family as a hindrance or obstacle to fulfilling your mission or you can become so inward focused that the mission becomes each individual's personal happiness. Families on mission help one another to be the best version of themselves to serve the bigger vision.

This doesn't mean that families do everything together all the time. But home becomes the base where each member of the family receives their identity and values and then goes out with a shared sense of mission vs. home being the place where each individual comes to recharge so that they can then go out to find their identity, worth, and values, elsewhere (work, school, etc.)

Application

So the two big things I want you to catch today are,

1. God has given each of our families the mandate to heaven-ize our world and He has given each member of our family a special part to play on the team.
2. Each of our families has been given the same general mission that we will fulfill in a particular way.

Some of us are called to heaven-ize our sports team, others of us will heaven-ize fine arts and theater, still others the business sector or education.

But before we execute the mission out there, we have to define the mission around the table. So here's your home-work.

1. Identify if you are currently operating from a "Family and Mission", "Family as Mission", or "Family on Mission" mentality.

I have been operating on a "Family and Mission" mentality. The lie is that what I do in ministry is more significant than what I do in family. That is a stronghold. A stronghold is a lie that the devil erects in our minds to create double-mindedness. Even though I know in my heart it isn't true, my actions prove otherwise. So in order to demolish that stronghold I have been speaking scripture over myself and my family. I personalized these verses,

Psalm 127

God has **gifted** and **rewarded** me with children. I am **blessed** because of them.

1 Timothy 3

I must manage my own household well, keeping Evangeline, Judah, and Lylah under control with all dignity. Keeping them respectful and well-behaved. If I cannot manage my own household, I cannot take care of the Church of God.

Ephesians 6

I will not provoke Evangeline, Judah, or Lylah to anger. I will not provoke them to the point of resentment with demands that are trivial, unreasonable, humiliating or abusive. I will not show

favoritism or indifference toward them. I will bring them up tenderly, with lovingkindness in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6

I will place the commands of God on my heart. I will teach them diligently to my children, and talk about them when I sit in my house, walk by the way, lie down, and rise.

Many husbands and wives have committed to growing through the *Resolution* Bible studies.

2. Pray about the specific Kingdom vision God has given your family. Let it start in your home and then adopt your block. Become a lighthouse of heaven on your street and pray for the homes and families in your neighborhood.

3. Once you identify your particular mission, discern how each person's gifts serve to fulfill that mission. Include your children in the mission of heaven-izing the world.

Conclusion

God gave a heavenly mandate to the first family. But instead of heaven-izing the world, they plunged it into darkness. You would think that God might have re-thunk His strategy at that point. He could've said, "Well, I tried families but they're too dysfunctional, selfish, and broken." But God never gave up on families. As Bethke says, "The very people who broke it are the same people who are going to fix it (Grace). God's not looking for perfect families, He's looking for willing families. Maybe you're a single parent, maybe you're a foster family, or a blended family, maybe you're single, all of us belong to the family of God. The Church is a family made up of families. You don't have Church friends, you only have Church family (Fast and Furious 3:16). Whatever the narrative has been, God is giving you the opportunity to write a new story for your family. He is empowering you to be a chain breaker and a legacy maker.