

# MARRIAGE: FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

## STUDY ONE

### This Is Not Your Grandfather's Family

#### *Selected Scriptures*

*In God's plan for marriage, God joins a man and a woman for life. Sin has messed things up, of course, but don't forget the original plan. It is so lovely and fulfilling.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE don't have to look far to see sin's damage in our culture. Images of unimaginable violence flood movies and TV shows. With just a few clicks on a computer, someone can encounter graphic pornography. Abortion is available "on demand," and stories of hate crimes fill the news cycle.

We may shudder at atrocities like these and think, *This isn't how things were even just a few decades ago.* Yet, in every era of history, sin has held the world tightly in its grip. While modern technology has made sin more accessible, sin has enticed human beings since the moment Adam and Eve disobeyed God by taking a bite of that forbidden fruit.

Today, however, one piece of God's handiwork bears the scars of sin's damages quite visibly:

#### THE FAMILY

This *Searching the Scriptures* series on marriage kicks off by focusing on God's good, original design for the family. Sin may continue to shift the moral tide of our culture, but God's plan for families—and marriages—hasn't changed. His design, laid out from the very beginning, offers the only anchor of truth to hold our families firm amid the storms of an ever-hostile world.



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### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Whether you're married or single, childless or a parent, God has placed each of us in our present circumstances in accordance with His good purpose. As you prepare to dig into what Scripture has to say about the family, offer this prayer to God:

*Father, thank You for welcoming me into Your eternal family through the death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Guide me as I study Your Word today and help me see how I can live for You in this sinful world. In Jesus' good name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As God crafted His creation in Genesis 1, He affirmed that each component of His work was *good*. The light, the land and the sea, the vegetation, the sun and the moon, the animals—all *good*. The account crescendos to Genesis 1:31: "Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!"

But, sadly, this perfection would not last. Adam and Eve's sin corrupted God's good design. Because we humans have betrayed our Creator, sin continues to infect our world and to pollute our hearts today.

*The heart of humanity hasn't changed. It's as bad off as it can possibly be before God. We are by nature, by choice, and by birth depraved. Without the redeeming power of Christ, we cannot pull ourselves out of a moral nosedive. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

This study will focus on two passages. Genesis 2:18–23 presents God's good picture for marriage. And Deuteronomy 6:4–13, 24 reveals how God intends for His people to have godly families amid a sinful world.



### Observation: God's Ideal Family

Every time Pastor Chuck Swindoll studies a passage of Scripture, he follows the same four steps:

1. **Observation:** *What does this biblical passage say?*
2. **Interpretation:** *What does this biblical passage mean?*
3. **Correlation:** *How does this biblical passage relate to other similar biblical passages?*
4. **Application:** *How should I respond to the truth of this biblical passage?*<sup>1</sup>



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Because the Bible speaks into our lives in powerful ways, it may be hard to resist the urge to jump straight to application. But good Bible study always begins by looking at the bare words of the text only.

#### **Establishing the Union of Man and Woman—Genesis 2:18–23**

Read [Genesis 2:18–23](#) and observe the steps God took to establish the union between the man and the woman. These words may sound familiar to you, so try to read them slowly and carefully, looking for details you may have never noticed.

Genesis 1 repeats the refrain, “God saw that it was good.” In [2:18](#), however, God broke this pattern and paused to point out something *not* good. What was it?

What task did God give the man to accomplish in [2:19–20](#)?

According to [2:21–22](#), who would become the man's “helper”? How did God provide this helper? (Note the contrast between how God “formed” the animals in [2:19](#) and how he “made” the helper in [2:22](#).)



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#### Passing the Faith to the Next Generation—Deuteronomy 6:4–13, 24

*Deuteronomy 6:4–9* is more commonly known as the *Shema*—a name derived from the opening Hebrew verb which means “to hear” or “to listen.” The Shema stood as a pillar of ancient Jewish theology—a key confession of faith. Jewish families would recite these words daily to remind themselves of their relationship with God and of the centrality of His law in their lives.

What is the fundamental command of the Shema noted in *6:5*?

A key purpose of the Shema was to pass down God's truth from generation to generation. According to *6:7*, when were the Israelites to teach their children God's commandments?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Whether at home or away, whether morning or evening, God's people were to teach their children about Him and His goodness . . . *always*. There is no better antidote to the poison of sin than an intimate relationship with our holy, just, and pure God.



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#### Interpretation: Restoring God's Goodness to the Family

Good application always is rooted in a sound understanding of a passage of Scripture. We interpret a passage by reviewing our observations and asking what a passage *means*.

The man's assignment of naming all the animals in [Genesis 2:18–20](#) may seem strange, but the context shows *why* God gave the man this task. What did God intend to do by parading all the animals before the man? Hint: notice the last line of [2:20](#).

Genesis 2:20 doesn't use the term "helper" to depict the woman as a servant or a slave. In fact, Scripture often uses this same term to refer to God as a "helper" for His people (see [Exodus 18:4](#); [Psalm 115:9–11](#)). What timeless principle does this model teach about God's design for marriage?

*The man sings the melody, and the woman sings the harmony. It's a beautiful duet that's put together by God. "All alone your voice can't carry it, Adam." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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According to *Deuteronomy 6:5–6*, how do God’s people demonstrate their love for Him? Why would the Israelites need to heed the Shema in the future? See *6:10–13*. For some guidance, check out *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org.

Even though the filth of sin soiled the world around God’s people, God reminded them of His own purity and goodness. By reminding ourselves of God’s character and by loving Him, we too can work against the damaging effects of sin in our lives. Sadly, though, Israel did not always follow the commands of the Shema, and the wickedness of the surrounding world polluted them.

 **Correlation: God’s Response to Israel’s Disobedience**

The moral decline we perceive in our modern culture occurred in ancient cultures as well. We read about ancient Israel’s drift into disobedience in the book of the prophet Hosea. Throughout his writings, Hosea showed that the brokenness of the family was a symptom of the sin infecting the entire nation. In other words, Hosea’s point was that Israel had not followed the Shema!

Read *Hosea 4:1–9*, and record a few key observations in the chart below. Then do the same for *14:1–9*. Pay careful attention to the contrasts between these two passages.

<b>Israel’s Sin and Guilt</b> Hosea 4:1–9	<b>God’s Forgiveness and Restoration</b> Hosea 14:1–9



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"I will heal you of your faithlessness," the Lord promised His people, adding a most reassuring truth, "my love knows no bounds" (Hosea 14:4) The world around us may feel like it is cracking under the pressure of sin. But our God is a God of *love*, and He can heal even the most faithless of people. He can even heal our broken families and marriages today.

### **Application: Godly Families in a Godless World**

As our culture drifts further away from God's design for marriage and family, how can we stand against the tide? Pastor Chuck shares four application principles:

1. *Wake up!* Complacency blinds us from seeing realistically.
2. *Listen up!* Knowledge frees us to think clearly.
3. *Step up!* Discernment prompts us to act courageously.
4. *Look up!* God loves us unconditionally.

Think of this as a three-step process. First, *wake up*. Then, *listen up*. Finally, *step up*. All the while, we should continually *look up* to God for His goodness, wisdom, and grace.

As you consider your own family and marriage, which of these steps do you sense God leading you to take with boldness? Are you a victim of complacency? Do you need more biblical knowledge or discernment? Record your thoughts below.



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For married couples, how can you and your spouse restore more of God's original design for marriage in your relationship? If you have children, how can you follow the ancient Shema and pass on the faith to the next generation?

What would it look like to keep the love of Jesus Christ as the central focus of your life? How would making this shift in perspective affect your family for its own good?

The world has drifted far from the ideals of creation. Thankfully, the Father is in the process of restoring creation through the sacrifice and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Anyone can experience God's grace, and God can restore any family to a state of goodness. Because of Him, **no** family is too far gone.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, I thank You for the way You have restored my life and allowed me to experience Your goodness. I ask that You give me the strength to serve You as a godly spouse, parent, child, or sibling so that my family can shine the light of Your goodness in a dark and sinful world. I pray these things in Jesus' good name. Amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. For helpful instruction from Pastor Chuck, consult our online instructional web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)." This page provides you an introduction to four important skills in Bible study—observation, interpretation, correlation, and application—along with other helpful study tips. You can also follow the link to purchase a copy of Pastor Chuck's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, on which our studies are based.

