

“In breadth of coverage, thoroughness of learning, clarity of analysis and argument and, I think, soundness of judgment, this solid, lucid, pastorally angled treatise has no peer. Evangelicals who research, debate, teach, and counsel on gender, sex, marriage, and family will find it an endlessly useful resource. The easy mastery with which the author threads his way through forty years’ special pleadings gives this compendium landmark significance, and I recommend it highly.”

—J. I. PACKER

Professor of Theology, Regent College

“A generation ago the most influential book on marriage for me was *God and Marriage* by Geoffrey Bromiley. It was remarkable in being an exposition of the Bible on marriage built around its relation to each member of the Trinity. No stories, just solid meat. I loved it. Now I have been married over 35 years and have sons who are near where I was in their marriages. For them—and for a whole generation under assault on the meaning of marriage and family—I am now looking to Andreas Köstenberger’s new and larger *God, Marriage, and Family* to do for this generation what Bromiley’s book did for mine. Unlike Bromiley’s book, Köstenberger’s book takes on the challenges of the present explicitly. That is more necessary now than it was 25 years ago. The special value of this book lies again in its pervasive exposition of Scripture. We are adrift in a sea of speculation without this. I am thankful for the book. I plan to give it to my grown children.”

—JOHN PIPER

Pastor for Preaching, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis

“This is a superb book—the work of a gifted exegete whose feet are firmly planted in this world. *God, Marriage, and Family* addresses the daunting issues facing today’s Christians regarding marriage, divorce, remarriage, sexuality, children, contraception, abortion, singleness, sex roles, and leadership with radical biblical fidelity and practicality. If you want the Bible on these questions, this is the book! As a pastor, I am recommending this book to all my church leaders. The charts and discussion questions make it easy to use and ideal for small groups. What a gift to today’s church!”

—R. KENT HUGHES

Pastor, College Church in Wheaton (Illinois)

“Characterized by exemplary exegetical analysis, Köstenberger’s book is a refreshing and welcome addition to the current debate on marriage and the family. This outstanding work will help academicians, pastors, counselors and anyone who genuinely seeks to understand God’s design from a biblical perspective.”

—MARY A. KASSIAN

Author, Edmonton, Alberta

“Anything Andreas Köstenberger publishes is worthy of attention. A New Testament professor with interests both systematic and pastoral is as rare a find as a Warfield or Carson. Köstenberger is such a find. His international education and experience, his teaching career, and his Christian character make him an author to be read with both care and anticipation.

“Growing out of his own teaching, writing, and living, this book is a great addition to any thoughtful Christian’s library. If you doubt this, just take a couple of minutes right now and read the preface. If you read the preface, you’ll read the book.

“Christians (and pastors) need to think more carefully—this book helps us. You may not agree with all of his conclusions, but you’ll be better equipped for living and teaching about God, marriage, and the family. Useful for scholars and ministers, the book’s charts and questions make it useful for personal and group studies as well.

“Köstenberger calls his approach ‘integrative’—I call it biblical and practical. Sensible, balanced, and biblical, this is a sound and timely summary of the Bible’s teaching on some of the most basic and yet controversial topics in today’s world. I highly recommend it.”

—MARK DEVER

Senior Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.

“If you are looking for just another collection of saccharine clichés about shiny happy Christian families, then you might want to leave this volume on the bookstore shelf. In this book, a world-renowned biblical scholar joins with a brilliant young ethicist to lay out a vision of where the family fits in the cosmic purposes of God. With clarity, conviction, and straight talk, this book avoids worn-out generalities and tackles head-on issues ranging from singleness to in vitro fertilization to the discipline of children. In an era when too many Christians listen more intently to television therapists than to the Bible on the question of the family, this could be one of the most significant books you ever read.”

—RUSSELL D. MOORE

Dean, School of Theology

Senior Vice President for Academic Administration,

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“There has never been a greater need for a comprehensive, well-researched, and thoroughly biblical examination of the interrelated topics of marriage, family, and sexuality. Although not all will agree with each conclusion, Köstenberger has done the church a great service by providing this readable and eminently useful volume, which includes a careful examination of a wide variety of related issues, such as singleness, childlessness, homosexuality, and divorce.”

—GORDON P. HUGENBERGER

Senior Minister, Park Street Church, Boston

Adjunct Professor of Old Testament,

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“It is refreshing to find a book on marriage and the family that is (1) practical and understandable, (2) grounded in the teaching of hundreds of texts taken from the whole Bible, and (3) written by a first-rate New Testament scholar with the help of a widely respected ethics professor. The book is wide-ranging and reflects mature judgment in interpreting Scripture and applying it to life. The author does not avoid controversial issues (such as divorce, homosexuality, contraception, infertility, spanking of children, and male headship, to name a few), but in each case he treats the issues fairly with ample explanation of alternative views. This is an excellent book that deserves to be widely used.”

—WAYNE GRUDEM

Research Professor of Bible and Theology,
Phoenix Seminary, Scottsdale, Arizona

“Books dealing with biblical perspectives on marriage and the family are readily available today for those interested in pursuing this subject. However, few exhibit the clarity of expression, graciousness of tone, practicality of counsel, and respect for the biblical evidence that is exhibited in this study. This volume should not only be on the shelf of every pastor in this land, but should also be in the syllabus of every course on marriage and the family taught in Christian colleges and seminaries. The author’s careful defense of traditional biblical values relating to family life demands a serious reading, especially by those who do not agree with him.”

—DANIEL I. BLOCK

Professor of Old Testament, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
President, Institute of Biblical Research

“*God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* is another welcome volume from the pen of New Testament scholar Andreas Köstenberger, who, with the input of ethicists David W. Jones and Mark Liederbach, has given a definitive volume on the family. Driven by a passion for Scripture and fueled by a sense of urgency borne out of the cultural wars that seek to hide and even destroy the biblical patterns, Köstenberger grapples with salient issues of interest to those who see the family as God’s basic unit in his revelation of himself. He does not sidestep difficult issues like homosexuality, adultery, co-habitation, sterility, contraception, and artificial reproductive technologies. We appreciate the author’s full and carefully researched treatment of divorce and remarriage and its impact on those in ministry, though here we disagree with his conclusion. Nevertheless, we do warmly commend to women and men—whether single or married—this invaluable resource with extensive exegetical sections, helpful bibliography, personal study questions (as well as the answers to those questions), and a wonderful user-friendly context in which the reader can work and learn.”

—PAIGE PATTERSON, President

DOROTHY KELLEY PATTERSON, Professor of Theology in Women’s Studies
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas

“With current statistics indicating that the foundations of the family have been eroded just as much among Bible-believing Christians as among the general population, and with marriage itself under full-scale cultural assault, one great need is for clear, sound biblical teaching in the churches. But the issues are knotty and the application is not for the faint-hearted. In this challenging context, Andreas Köstenberger has provided us with a superb exposition of God’s Word on these matters. The Christian looking for a brief, understandable, straightforward, intelligent, faithful presentation of what the Bible says about marriage, family, divorce, remarriage, homosexuality, abortion, birth control, infertility, adoption, and singleness need look no further. *God, Marriage, and Family: Restoring the Biblical Foundation* is timely, well-informed, balanced, and pastorally wise. It will educate and encourage Christian shepherds, and challenge and aid the flock in these perilous times. One great advantage of this book is the helpful collection of personal and group study aids accompanying each chapter. This makes the book’s solid instruction all the more accessible to teachers, preachers, and congregations, and aids the process of communication and discipleship.”

—J. LIGON DUNCAN III

Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi
Moderator, General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America

“While many popular treatments of marriage and the family are available, very few have explored with care and precision Scripture’s own teaching on these crucial subjects. With his extensive background in the interpretation of the New Testament, Dr. Köstenberger has now provided a vital resource for the church. And the timing of this major book could not be better! Köstenberger does not avoid the hard contemporary issues of gender and sexuality but addresses them with sensitivity combined with keen biblical insight. We are indebted to Professor Köstenberger for this invaluable contribution.”

—BRUCE A. WARE

Professor of Christian Theology
Senior Associate Dean, School of Theology,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“With the current attack on marriage and family now raging at a fevered pitch, Köstenberger’s book, *God, Marriage, and Family*, is a vital resource that should be in the hands of every evangelical. His approach is rooted in a sound treatment of Scripture, coupled with his own passionate desire to see his culture restored to its Judeo-Christian foundations. Of particular note is the wealth of useful information Köstenberger makes available to his readers, many of whom will subsequently utilize it in their own arenas of life and ministry. This is a book that will often be quoted and that any person concerned about the current debates on marriage and family should have in his library.”

—TOM ELLIFF

Pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Oklahoma
Chairman, Southern Baptist Council on Family Life

“This volume is a treasure trove of biblical wisdom on matters pertaining to marriage, child-rearing, singleness, and sexuality in general. It is understandable for a lay reader, yet informed by a wide range of scholarship. It should find avid readers among individual Christians, but it is also well-suited for use in church or school classroom settings. As Western society struggles to hold on to its social identity, this study reaffirms God’s will for self-understanding and family ties. Loving one another in the family is about knowing and reflecting the love of the Father who sent his Son. Readers seeking the whole counsel of God on these matters will find enormous assistance here.”

—ROBERT W. YARBROUGH

Professor of New Testament

Chairman of New Testament Department,

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“Too often people, even evangelicals, engage in debates about the family or homosexuality or divorce without knowing well what the Scriptures teach. We stand in debt to Köstenberger and Jones for providing a biblically informed discussion on all these issues and more. The book is especially valuable because it is remarkably clear and comprehensible, while at the same time reflecting deep and responsible research. . . . I consistently found the conclusions to be sound and biblically faithful.”

—THOMAS R. SCHREINER

Professor of New Testament, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“These days it is important for us to remember that God has something to say about marriage and family. With all of the competing voices insisting on new definitions and unbiblical patterns, Andreas Köstenberger, along with David Jones, has provided the Christian community with an invaluable resource. This book is marked by biblical fidelity, excellent scholarship, readability, and smooth organization, and covers everything from the husband-wife relationship to ethical issues. It will be perfect for the college or seminary classroom, for local church educational programs, and for families trying to conform their lives to the Word of God. I heartily recommend it.”

—RANDY STINSON

Executive Director, The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

“At a time when our society is attempting to redefine the standards and values of marriage and family, Dr. Andreas Köstenberger has brought us back to the biblical foundation. While Dr. Köstenberger does an excellent job in explaining many of the various secular views concerning marriage and family, he shows why God’s way is still the better way. He tackles some very difficult and politically sensitive issues in this book. The view of marriage and the family presented in this book may not be the most popular view in our culture today, but it is the biblical view.”

—BOB BAKER

Pastor of Pastoral Care

Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, California

“The richness and beauty of God’s character and ways are most evident when we observe his entire redemptive story, from creation to final restoration. After all, though parts of a portrait might be interesting, it is the beauty and wonder of the whole that reveals the author. The unique contribution of *God, Marriage, and Family* is Köstenberger’s approach: he carefully traces God’s unfolding plan for marriage and family from creation through to the end. This holistic approach not only raises intriguing issues generally left unaddressed in a book on marriage, such as the miserable failure of some Old Testament marriages, but more importantly this approach offers a rich and unified biblical theology of the family and marriage.

“Köstenberger tackles difficult topics like divorce, homosexuality, and sexual reproduction within the framework of God’s plan for marriage and family as revealed from Genesis to Revelation. Given the complexity of such issues, some will surely disagree with points here and there, but there is no wrangling about his approach. The true beauty of marriage and the family shines most brightly when one looks at these topics as they are developed throughout God’s entire story.”

—RICHARD W. HOVE
Campus Crusade for Christ
Duke University, Durham, North Carolina

GOD,
MARRIAGE,
and
FAMILY

REBUILDING THE
BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

ANDREAS J. KÖSTENBERGER
WITH DAVID W. JONES

CROSSWAY BOOKS

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FOREWORD

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY are good gifts from a great God. Unfortunately, in our day the Master's Manual is often neglected and even rejected. Ignorance, apathy, and antagonism abound in our culture when it comes to God's blueprint for the sacred institution of the home. It is out of this context and crisis that I take great pleasure in commending this outstanding work. I am convinced it will become a standard text in the field for many years to come.

In *God, Marriage, and Family*, Andreas Köstenberger (with the help of David Jones) provides a comprehensive and thorough biblical analysis of issues related to marriage and family. The research is first-class, and the bibliography alone is worth the purchase. This book is a gold mine of information as the authors examine the entire breath of Holy Scripture in search of the Bible's teaching on crucial issues related to the life of marriage, family, and the home. The treatment of each subject, in my judgment, is fair, balanced, and judicious. On the few occasions where Bible-believing Christians may legitimately disagree, the authors thoroughly present both sides of the issue while indicating their own preferred view. In their careful scholarship and well reasoned argumentation, the authors provide a model of evenhandedness in dealing with hotly debated issues.

It is rare that you find a book that knits together in such a beautiful tapestry both the theological and the practical. *God, Marriage, and Family* accomplishes this superbly. The book is theocentric and bibliocentric from beginning to end and yet, commonsense observations and spiritual counsel are woven into the fabric of each chapter. Perhaps more books ought to be written by a biblical scholar in collaboration with Christian ethicists who have a special interest in and love for marriage and family.

Having arrived in January 2004 as the new president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., I was

immediately impressed by the spirituality and scholarship of its faculty. Drs. Köstenberger and Jones (as well as Dr. Liederbach, who contributed two sections on medical ethics) are among those gems. I love these men and rejoice in this wonderful gift they have presented to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that God will give this volume both a wide audience and receptive hearts. *God, Marriage, and Family* calls us to a higher standard, God's standard, when it comes to how we think about marriage and family.

Daniel L. Akin

President

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Wake Forest, North Carolina

PREFACE

THE VISION FOR THE present volume was born when I (Andreas) was asked to write an essay on marriage and the family in the New Testament for a recent book (*Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*; InterVarsity, 2003). While working on the project, it became clear that while issues related to marriage and the family are integrated in Scripture, there still is no book-length treatment that presents the biblical teaching on these topics in an integrative format. In our own context at Southeastern Seminary, a new course, “Marriage and Family: Foundations,” was recently added to the curriculum and is now required of all students, which further underscored the need for this kind of treatment.

Not only are we driven by a passion for God’s Word and for teaching what the Bible says on marriage and the family, but recent developments in the general culture further fuel our sense of urgency and concern. Some denominations have found it necessary to add a statement defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman to their official doctrinal base. Episcopalians have appointed an openly practicing homosexual as bishop for the first time in their history. The courts and public officials have ruled, enacted, and spoken out in favor of same-sex marriages. The media, too, tend to be sympathetic to gay rights issues. Others in contemporary government have gone on record as favoring a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman.

On the basis of our conviction that the current cultural crisis with regard to marriage and family is at the root a spiritual crisis, we firmly believe that the only solution is a return to, and rebuilding of, the biblical foundations of these institutions. Once God is removed as the initiator of the institution of marriage and the family, the door is opened to a plethora of human understandings of these terms and concepts, and, in the spirit of postmodernism, no one definition has the right to claim

greater legitimacy than any others. The only mechanism to adjudicate between competing definitions, then, is not that of morality but that of public opinion and majority vote.

Continuing down this path of moral decline and corruption would inevitably affect the stability of our civilization. Removed from its Judeo-Christian moorings, our society would instead be built on an ethic whose highest values are no loftier than individual self-fulfillment, personal pleasure, and affluence (as Francis Schaeffer warned decades ago). Hoping that the political process, or reasonable human discussion, will solve the current dilemma of seeking to define or redefine marriage and the family is an illusion. We write this book with the conviction that the only way *forward* is to *return* to Scripture and to put God back at the center of marriage and the family—hence the title of our book, *God, Marriage, and Family*.

In the first chapter, “The Current Cultural Crisis: Rebuilding the Foundation,” we seek to make a case for the need for a biblical and integrative treatment of marriage and the family by giving two reasons why such a treatment is vitally important. The following two chapters, “Leaving and Cleaving: Marriage in the Old Testament” and “No Longer Two, but One: Marriage in the New Testament,” present the divine institution of marriage in the opening chapters of Genesis, discuss violations of God’s plan for marriage in the history of Old Testament Israel, as well as glimpses of the ideal in Old Testament wisdom literature, and derive a Christian theology of marriage, focusing primarily on the teachings of Jesus and Paul. Chapter 4, “The Nature of Marriage: Sacrament, Contract, or Covenant?” is devoted to a discussion of the major views on the nature of marriage and whether marriage is best viewed as a sacrament, contract, or covenant, including a discussion of the implications of the viewpoint adopted in the present work.

Chapters 5 and 6, “The Ties that Bind: Family in the Old Testament” and “The Christian Family: Family in the New Testament,” provide an overview of the biblical teaching on the family and discuss topics such as the ancient Israelite conception of family, the importance of teaching children about God, and the need to instill biblical values in young people. We also look at Jesus’ encounters with and statements involving children and discuss Paul’s teaching on the father’s role in the

home and in teaching and disciplining his children. Other subjects are the importance of motherhood, the way in which children's obedience is to serve as a vital part of their Christian discipleship, and both good and bad biblical examples of parenting.

Chapters 7 and 8, "To Have or Not to Have Children: Special Issues Related to the Family (Part 1)" and "Requiring the Wisdom of Solomon: Special Issues Related to the Family (Part 2)," deal with a variety of issues related to marriage and the family. Chapter 7 covers childlessness and medical ethics, abortion, contraception, artificial reproductive technologies (ART), and adoption. (The sections on contraception and ART were contributed by our colleague Mark Liederbach.) Chapter 8 is devoted to special issues faced in parenting today, such as single parenting and physical discipline. The chapter concludes with a discussion of spiritual warfare pertaining to marriage and the family. Chapter 9, "Undivided Devotion to the Lord: The Divine Gift of Singleness," surveys singleness in Old and New Testament times (including important statements by Jesus and Paul on the subject) as well as in the early church. The topics of cohabitation and premarital sex as well as courtship and dating are also covered.

The following two chapters deal with the major threats to biblical marriage and the family. Chapter 10, "Abandoning Natural Relations: The Biblical Verdict on Homosexuality," surveys all the major passages on homosexuality (and lesbianism) in Scripture (including those dealing with Sodom and Gomorrah, the Levitical Holiness Code, and the major pronouncements of the apostle Paul on the subject). After a thorough engagement of attempts employed by advocates of homosexuality to prove that Scripture only prohibits certain aberrant forms of homosexuality but not monogamous, faithful same-sex unions, we arrive at a clear, unequivocal conclusion regarding the biblical verdict on homosexuality.

Chapter 11, "Separating What God Has Joined Together: Divorce and Remarriage," deals with the second major threat to biblical marriage and the family. With divorce rates at unprecedented levels, both in the general culture and among Christians, a thorough understanding of the biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage is urgently needed. Unfortunately, this is an area in which there is no consensus even among

Bible-believing Christians. The complexity of the issues involved requires a treatment that is perhaps more technical than that which is provided in the other chapters in order to deal with the different views fairly. We hope that looking at Scripture's teaching on both homosexuality and divorce will prove to reinforce our appreciation for and commitment to building biblical marriages and families.

Family requirements for leaders in the church is the final topic addressed in the book. Chapter 12, "Faithful Husbands: Qualifications for Church Leadership," includes discussions on the meaning of the phrase "husband of one wife" (or "faithful husband") in Paul's Pastoral Epistles; church officers and the issue of divorce; requirements pertaining to church leaders' children; and singleness and church leadership. Chapter 13, "Uniting All Things in Him: Concluding Synthesis," provides a brief summary of our major findings. The final section, "For Further Study: Helpful Resources," identifies materials for those who want to engage in additional research and study.

One word on the title, *God, Marriage, and Family*, may be appropriate as well. While the resemblance to the title of Geoffrey Bromiley's book, *God and Marriage*, is strictly coincidental, it is probably no coincidence that Bromiley's is one of the few more satisfying biblical and thoroughgoing theological treatments on the subject. First written in 1980 (Eerdmans) and reprinted in 2003 (Wipf & Stock), the book retains its usefulness as a survey of the major biblical passages on marriage and their theological ramifications. While Bromiley erects a certain dichotomy between Scripture on the one hand and God on the other (opting for the latter), we would affirm that no such dichotomy exists. Precisely *by studying Scripture* we can know God's will for marriage and the family and rebuild the biblical foundation. Nevertheless, we are honored to build on Bromiley's work in many ways and hope to expand its scope by a more detailed engagement of the relevant biblical texts and a more thorough exploration of related issues. We are well aware that every chapter of the present volume, in turn, could easily be expanded into a still fuller treatment if not an entire monograph.

We trust that the present integrative and biblical treatment of issues related to marriage and the family will prove beneficial not only to seminary students and pastors in local churches but also to a wide variety

of other readers. Sunday school classes, home Bible studies, discipleship groups, homeschool families, and others will find this a helpful tool to explore and understand what the Bible teaches about these all-important topics. To this end we have provided a study guide including discussion questions (plus answers) in the back of the volume. Others who are not Christians may want to view this volume simply to see what the Bible teaches on marriage and the family, whether or not they agree with all of our conclusions.

In the interest of full disclosure, David W. Jones wrote initial drafts of chapters 2, 4, 9, and 10, as well as of the introduction and conclusion (chapters 1 and 13). Andreas Köstenberger wrote the remainder of the book and thoroughly revised and added to the initial drafts provided by David Jones. In addition, Mark Liederbach provided the sections on contraception and artificial reproduction technologies in chapter 7, Alan Bandy contributed the discussion of physical punishment in chapter 8 and provided material on single parenting, and Corin Mihaila assisted in preparing the charts and the Personal and Group Study Guide. Special thanks are due Margaret Köstenberger, who thoroughly edited a preliminary version of this book before it was submitted for publication. Dawn Jones read through the manuscript several times and made a number of suggestions for improvement. David and Ann Croteau and Alan Bandy also read through parts or all of an earlier draft of this book (David twice) and provided helpful feedback.

Last but not least, we would like to express our gratitude to our wives and children, who have taught us, and continue to teach us, so much about the true meaning of marriage and the family and give us plenty of opportunity to practice what we preach! Nowhere is it harder to “walk our talk” than in our own homes where our loved ones know our shortcomings as well as (hopefully) our successes. Above all, we are so grateful that, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have been introduced to a vital relationship with God our heavenly Father, whose loving care and faithfulness we experience every day and without whom we would never have been able to write this book. To God, and to him alone, be the glory.

THE CURRENT CULTURAL CRISIS: REBUILDING THE FOUNDATION

FOR THE FIRST TIME in its history, Western civilization is confronted with the need to *define* the meaning of the terms “marriage” and “family.” What until now has been considered a “normal” family, made up of a father, a mother, and a number of children, has in recent years increasingly begun to be viewed as one among several options, which can no longer claim to be the only or even superior form of ordering human relationships. The Judeo-Christian view of marriage and the family with its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures has to a significant extent been replaced with a set of values that prizes human rights, self-fulfillment, and pragmatic utility on an individual and societal level. It can rightly be said that marriage and the family are institutions under siege in our world today, and that with marriage and the family, our very civilization is in crisis.

The current cultural crisis, however, is merely symptomatic of a deep-seated *spiritual* crisis that continues to gnaw at the foundations of our once-shared societal values. If God the Creator in fact, as the Bible teaches, instituted marriage and the family, and if there is an evil being called Satan who wages war against God’s creative purposes in this world, it should come as no surprise that the divine foundation of these institutions has come under massive attack in recent years. Ultimately,

we human beings, whether we realize it or not, are involved in a cosmic spiritual conflict that pits God against Satan, with marriage and the family serving as a key arena in which spiritual and cultural battles are fought. If, then, the *cultural* crisis is symptomatic of an underlying *spiritual* crisis, the solution likewise must be spiritual, not merely cultural.

In *God, Marriage, and Family*, we hope to point the way to this spiritual solution: a return to, and rebuilding of, the biblical foundation of marriage and the family. God's Word is not dependent on man's approval, and the Scriptures are not silent regarding the vital issues facing men and women and families today. In each of the important areas related to marriage and the family, the Bible offers satisfying instructions and wholesome remedies to the maladies afflicting our culture. The Scriptures record the *divine institution* of marriage and present a *Christian theology* of marriage and parenting. They offer insight for decision making regarding abortion, contraception, infertility, and adoption. They offer helpful guidance for those who are single or unmarried and address the major threats to marriage and the family: homosexuality and divorce.

THE CURRENT CONFUSION OVER MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Measured against the biblical teaching on marriage and the family, it seems undeniable that Western culture is decaying. In fact, the past few decades have witnessed nothing less than a major paradigm shift with regard to marriage and the family. The West's Judeo-Christian heritage and foundation have largely been supplanted by a *libertarian ideology* that elevates human freedom and self-determination as the supreme principles for human relationships. In their confusion, many hail the decline of the biblical-traditional model of marriage and the family and its replacement by new competing moralities as major progress. Yet the following list of adverse effects of unbiblical views of marriage and the family upon society demonstrates that replacing the biblical-traditional model of marriage and the family with more "progressive" ones is detrimental even for those who do not view the Bible as authoritative.

One of the negative consequences of the erosion of the biblical-traditional model are skyrocketing *divorce* rates. However, the costs of divorce are troubling, not only for the people involved—especially chil-

dren—but also for society at large. While children may not show ill effects of the trauma of divorce in the short run, serious negative long-term consequences have been well documented. *Sex outside of marriage*, because it does not occur within the secure environment of an exclusive lifetime commitment, also exerts a heavy price from those who engage in adulterous or otherwise illicit sexual relationships. Teenage pregnancies and abortion are the most glaring examples. While pleasurable in the short run, sex outside of marriage takes a heavy toll both psychologically and spiritually and contributes to the overall insecurity and stress causing the destabilization of our cultural foundation. *Homosexuality* deprives children in households run by same-sex partners of primary role models of both sexes and is unable to fulfill the procreative purposes God intended for the marriage union. *Gender-role confusion*, too, is an increasingly serious issue; many men and women have lost the concept of what it means to be masculine or feminine. This results in a loss of the complete identity of being human as God created us, male and female. Our sex does not merely determine the form of our sex organs but is an integral part of our entire being.

These few examples illustrate the disturbing fact that the price exacted by the world as a result of its abandonment of the biblical foundations for marriage and the family is severe indeed. An integrative, biblical treatment of marriage and the family is essential to clear up moral confusion and to firm up convictions that, if acted upon, have the potential of returning the church and culture back to God's intentions for marriages and families.

THE LACK OF BIBLICAL, INTEGRATIVE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE ON MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

It is not only the world that is suffering the consequences of neglecting the Creator's purposes for marriage and the family. The church, too, having lowered itself to the standard of the world in many ways, has become a part of the problem, and is not offering the solutions the world needs. Not that Christians are unaware of their need to be educated about God's plan for marriage and the family. An abundance of resources and activities is available. There are specialized ministries and parachurch organizations. There are marriage seminars and retreats.

There are books on marriage and the family, as well as magazines, video productions, Bible studies, and official statements focusing on marriage and the family. Yet for all the church is doing in this area, the fact remains that in the end there is shockingly little difference between the world and the church. Why is this the case? We believe the reason why all the above-mentioned efforts to build strong Christian marriages and families are ineffective to such a significant extent is found, at least in part, in the *lack of commitment to seriously engage the Bible as a whole*. The result is that much of the available Christian literature on the subject is seriously imbalanced.

Anyone stepping into a Christian or general bookstore will soon discover that while there is a plethora of books available on individual topics, such as marriage, singleness, divorce and remarriage, and homosexuality, there is *very little material* that explores on a deeper, more thoroughgoing level the entire fabric of God's purposes for human relationships. Though there is a place for books focused narrowly on one given topic to address certain specific needs, it is only when we see how the Bible's teaching on human relationships *coheres* and finds its common source in the Creator and his wise and beneficial purposes for men and women that we will have the insight and the strength to rise above our natural limitations and to embrace God's plan for human relationships in their fullness and completeness.

When a couple struggles in their marriage, they often find it helpful to focus on the more superficial remedies, such as improving their communication skills, enriching their sex life, learning better how to meet each other's needs, or similar techniques. Yet often the true cause for marital problems lies deeper. What does it mean for a man to leave his father and mother and to cleave to his wife? What does it mean for a husband and a wife to become "one flesh"? How can they be naked and not ashamed? How can it be that, once married, husband and wife are "no longer two, but one," as Jesus taught, because it is *God* who joined them together? How does sin twist and distort the roles of husband and wife, parent and child? Only if we are seeking to answer some of these deeper, underlying questions will we be adequately equipped to deal with specific challenges we face in our relationships with one another.

Yet the fact remains that many, if not most, of the plethora of pop-

ular books written on marriage and the family are theologically weak and not fully adequate in their application of sound principles of biblical interpretation. Many of these authors have Ph.D.s in counseling or psychology but their formal training in the study of Scripture is lacking. Theological and hermeneutical naïveté gives birth to superficial diagnoses, which in turn issue in superficial remedies. It seems that the dynamics and effects of sin are poorly understood in our day. The result is that many Christian self-help books owe more to secular culture than a thoroughgoing Christian worldview. Christian, biblical counselors who take Scripture seriously and believe that diagnoses and remedies must be based on a theologically and hermeneutically accurate understanding of the biblical teaching on marriage and the family find this unhelpful if not positively misleading.

For this reason there remains a need for a volume that does not treat issues related to marriage and the family in isolation from one another but that shows how human fulfillment in these relationships is rooted in the divine revelation found exclusively and sufficiently in Scripture.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS BOOK: BIBLICAL AND INTEGRATIVE

The authors of the present volume believe that a biblical and integrative approach most adequately represents the Bible's teaching on marriage and the family. Within the limited scope of this work, we will attempt to sketch out the contours of a "*biblical theology* of marriage and the family," that is, a presentation of what the Bible *itself* has to say on these vital topics. While we certainly do not claim to have the final word on every issue or to be infallible interpreters of the sacred Word, what we are after is decidedly *not* what *we* think marriage or family should be, based on our own preconceived notions, preferences, or traditional values, but what we believe *Scripture itself* tells us about these institutions. This, of course, requires a humble, submissive stance toward Scripture rather than one that asserts one's own independence from the will of the Creator and insists on inventing one's own rules of conduct.

In such a spirit, and placing ourselves consciously *under*, rather than *above*, Scripture, we will seek to determine in the following chapters what the Bible teaches on the various components of human relation-

ships in an *integrative* manner: the nature of, and special issues related to, marriage and the family, childrearing, singleness, as well as homosexuality and divorce and remarriage. Because the Bible is the Word of God, which is powerful and life-transforming, we know that those who are willing to be seriously engaged by Scripture will increasingly come to know and understand God's will for marriage and the family and be able to appropriate God's power in building strong Christian homes and families. This, in turn, will both increase God's honor and reputation in this world that he has made and provide the seasoning and illumination our world needs at this time of cultural ferment and crisis with regard to marriage and the family.