

Developing a Christian Worldview: Applications

FOCUS

Fellowship of Christian University Students

MARRIAGE, FAMILY & SINGLENES



Creation



Reflects Image of God

▶ Unity in Diversity (Gen 1:27)

- “in the image of God....male & female he created them”

▶ Implications

- Relationality, not autonomy
- Otherness, not cliquishness
- Dependence, not self-sufficiency

▶ Nature of Relationship (Gen 2:24)

- Decisive (leave parents)
- Committed (united to wife)
- Physical (one flesh) – “re-union”
- Hence, Exclusive (cf. Relationship to God)

Equality & Complementarity

▶ Equality

- equal beneficiaries of “image” (w.r.t. God) & “dominion” (w.r.t. the earth)
- A need to redress balance? Gender issues, stereotyping

▶ Complementarity (w.r.t. each other)

- “Not good for man to be alone” (Gen 2:18)
- “Helpmeet” – note 15/21 in OT God is help of man
- Not only in marriage, but also generally in society
- Same sex relationships not the norm

Hierarchy? Masculine Headship

▶ Creational Principles

- Mode “out of man” (1 Cor 11:8)
- Sequence “Adam first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13)
- Purpose “woman for man” (1 Cor 11:9)

▶ Not inconsistent with equality

- Hierarchy in Trinity – Christ defers to Father; Spirit proceeds from Father & Son
- Head plays an integrating (Eph 4:15,16) & nourishing (Eph 5:28,29) role; not so much control

▶ Cultural symbols (can change with context)

- Veils, silence in church

Family – Unit of Society

- ▶ Genesis 4: Children (4:1); Brotherhood (4:2,9); City (4:17); Livestock, Music, Tools (4:20-22)
- ▶ Psalm 128 – Blessings of wife, children
- ▶ Proverbs 31 – the entrepreneurial wife
- ▶ Bringing up children in the Lord (Deut 6:4-9)
- ▶ Tribe – Clan – Family (Josh 7:14)
- ▶ Kinsman redeemer (Ruth 4)
 - Expression of extended family
 - Economic safety net
 - Conjugal responsibility

Some Practical Issues

▶ Choosing a spouse

- Being chosen while choosing
- Similarity is helpful (some common ground)
- But difference can help to focus on uniting
- Context of marriage also important (home, away)

▶ Planning a family

- God “opens womb”; but some kinds of assisted reproduction are OK. (Note also: Adoption)
- “One flesh” experience not only for procreation, but also for physical expression of love; hence some forms of birth control are OK

Application to Singleness

- ▶ Family is important for everyone
- ▶ Experience of unity in diversity is important (work, church, social relationships)
- ▶ In conservative cultures, self fulfillment is important (e.g. independence)
- ▶ Sexual expression is clearly limited; but can be sublimated
- ▶ All of us are single for some duration

Fall



Effects on Marriage

▶ Shame & Blame

- Ashamed of each other (Gen 3:7)
- Adam blames Eve, and God who gave her (Gen 3:12)

▶ Power Structure in Relationship

- Husband will rule; childbearing in pain (3:16)

▶ Institution threatened

- Divorce - even regularized by Moses (Mt 19:3-10)
- Adultery – even committed by David (2 Sam 11)
- Same sex relationships – lacks “otherness”

Metaphor for Apostasy

▶ Sexual & Spiritual Sin

- Condemned by prophets in same breath
- Themes of jealousy, faithfulness

▶ Hosea

- Married a practising prostitute
- Wooing a straying lover – the heart of God

Effects on Family (Sins of Father?)

- ▶ Murder in First Family (Gen 4)
 - Cain's slaying of Abel
 - But protection even for Cain
- ▶ Jealousy & Revenge (Gen 25-50)
 - Joseph's Coat & Brothers' Revenge
 - But Joseph's Forgiveness
- ▶ Rebellious Children (2 Sam & 1 Kings)
 - Absalom usurping David's throne
 - Solomon straying from David's ways
 - But, David's greater son, Jesus saved the world

The Nuclear Family

▶ Selfish Institution?

- “God bless me and my wife,
Our John and his wife,
Us four and no more”

▶ Driven to competition, not cooperation

- Keeping up with the Joneses
- Used in advertising

Redemption



Christ and his Church

- ▶ Paul's theology of Christ & Church (Eph 5:21-33)
 - Church is Bride of Christ AND Body of Christ
 - Hence, men to love brides as their bodies
 - In practical ways; in deed & not merely word
(Note difference in loving others vs. ourselves)
- ▶ Love languages
 - Quality time
 - Words of appreciation
 - Thoughtful gifts
 - Acts of mercy
 - Physical contact

Redeemed Relationships

- ▶ Not unequally yoked (2 Cor 6:14)
 - Common vision, values and motivations
 - Bringing up children
- ▶ Submitting to each other (Eph 5:21-33)
 - Wives to acknowledge male headship
 - Husbands to mimic Christ's love – take initiative
- ▶ Children and Parents (Eph 6:1-4)
 - Children to obey & honour parents
 - Parents not to exasperate children
 - Creative tension (discipline vs. questioning)

An Extended Family

- ▶ Jesus the adolescent (Lk 2:41-51)
 - Attended to his Father's house, but
 - Obedient to earthly parents
- ▶ Jesus the adult (Mt 12:48-50, Lk 11:27-28)
 - Opened to all membership of his family, but
 - Made provision for mother at his death (Jn 19:26-27)
- ▶ Applications
 - "Giving" children to ministry
 - Downplaying nuclear family in church family

Singleness: a High Calling

▶ Jesus' example

- Perfection of humanity (related to men & women; and to the Father)

▶ Jesus' teaching

- Renouncing marriage for the Kingdom (Mt 19:12)
- Relativizing the importance of family (Mt 10:34-37)

▶ Paul's opinion (1 Cor 7)

- Singleness is better for service, but
- Better to marry than to "burn"

Consummation



Wedding Banquet

- ▶ Consummation portrayed as a wedding
 - Jesus' parables (Mt 22:1-14)
 - John's vision (Rev 19, 21)
- ▶ Christ, the bridegroom
- ▶ Bride – Church, new Jerusalem
- ▶ Focus is on the grand scheme, not on separate relationships

Marriage is Temporal

- ▶ No marriage in the resurrection (Mk 12:18-27)
 - The Sadducees' "trick" question
- ▶ Marriage contract ceases with death (Rom 7:2-3)
 - Paul's argument about binding of the "law"

Conclusions & Questions



Conclusions

- ▶ Marriage & Family are God ordained blessings
- ▶ They can become very oppressive or selfish
- ▶ Extended family and sharing are ways to stabilize society
- ▶ Jesus' singleness for service is a challenge to a marriage endorsing culture
- ▶ We should not emphasize the nuclear family in the church family
- ▶ Human marriage is only temporal and will be overshadowed by the marriage of the Lamb

Questions for Discussion

- ▶ Are marriage and family a barrier to service? Should we first consider a calling to singleness?
- ▶ How can we make our nuclear families less oppressive and/or selfish?
- ▶ Should we “downplay” the nuclear family in a church family? Why? How?
- ▶ Will the church family undermine extended family relationships?
- ▶ What are the strengths and opportunities of singleness?

WORK & REST



Creation



Work reflects the Image of God

- ▶ Dominant image of God in Gen 1 is that of a worker (Gen 2:1-3)
 - Hence the need of work (responsibility) for all
- ▶ We often derive our identity from our work
 - Job description is more authentic than title
- ▶ Different kinds of creativity in work
 - Practical (Gen 2:15) & Artistic (Gen 2:19)
 - Work arises from both Creation & Fall
 - More prestigious professions from Fall? (law, medicine)
 - We need to help subordinates to find creativity

Work is a Partnership with God

▶ Partnership is God's style

- Nature & nurture (God & gardener)
- Stewardship in both earth tending & evangelism
- God is a partner of our success (Deut 8:17-18);
Hence, no "self made men"

▶ Stewards of God on Earth

- God's mandate of agency (Gen 1:27, 2:15)
- God's style – servant leadership (Gen 2:15)

▶ Skill comes from God (Ex 31:2-11)

Work: an Interaction with the Earth

- ▶ Till & keep (serve & protect) (Gen 2:15)
- ▶ The earth is a partner in our success (land with milk & honey)
- ▶ Human responsibility (not merely equality) is important for environmental conservation

Rest: the climax of creation (Gen 2:1-3)

- ▶ God rested from creating, not from sustaining (Gen 2:2-3)
- ▶ A pattern for man – work & rest
- ▶ Rest relativizes feelings of indispensability
- ▶ Rest is meant for the earth too; also for subordinate workers (Lev 25)
- ▶ Rest could/should also be creative (recreation)
 - Especially if work itself is not creative
- ▶ The leisure industry – the arts, hospitality

Fall



Work is affected by the Fall

▶ Adam's legacy

- Ground cursed (Gen 3:17-18)
- Labour in work (Gen 3:19a)

▶ Sloth (Prov 6:10-11, 2 Thess 3:6-13)

▶ Loss of meaning (Eccles 2:17-26 & 4: 1-8)

▶ Injustice & Exploitation (Prov 13:23)

▶ Power structures in work relations

- Slavery (especially in Egypt)
- Servants (in Israel)

Alienation

▶ From the Earth

- Interaction with earth is far removed in modernity

▶ From Work

- Fragmentation of work – assembly line
- Work seen as a reductionist process – “inputs”
- Modern technology blamed (e.g. Jacques Ellul)

▶ From Ourselves: humans judged by artifacts

- Clock – for efficiency
- Computer – for logical thinking

Redemption



Work has to be judged carefully

(Eph 4:28)

- ▶ No longer steal, but work
 - Judge the effects of work – do the rich get richer?
- ▶ Doing useful things, with hands
 - Do the things that God is blessing- e.g. rebuilding Jerusalem (Nehemiah) & temple (Haggai)
 - Service oriented careers
 - Counter-cultural careers
- ▶ To give to those in need
 - Responsibility to use disposable income

Work and Ministry

▶ The call to Ministry

- Jesus' disciples: leaving livelihoods (Mk 1:20, 2:13)
- No mere civilian pursuits (2 Tim 2:4)
- Emptiness of "great things" (Jer 45:5)
- Harvest great, labourers few (Mt 9:37-38)
- Note Paul's tentmaking (using work for ministry)

▶ Work can be Ministry (Rom 13:1-7)

- Accomplishing God's purposes in the world - *diakonos* (vs 4); *leiturgos* (vs 6)
- Equipping the church for ministry in the world; not in the church
- Seeking the good of the city (Jer 29:7)

Redeeming Work Relationships

- ▶ Freedom from “men-pleasing” (Eph 6:5-8)
 - Motivation to serve & obey Christ wholeheartedly
 - Taking part in “subduing the earth”; pride in work
 - Rewards from Christ
- ▶ Fairplay and equality (Eph 6:9)
 - Both servant & master will be judged
 - Both justice (Jas 5:4) and kindness are important
 - Hygiene and self actualization
 - Workers with reduced rights: e.g. domestic workers

Witnessing thro' Work: Daniel et al (Dan 1-6)

- ▶ Daniel as salt & light
 - Different, contact with aliens, transforming effect
- ▶ Both different and similar (Dan 1)
 - Similar in foreign name & curriculum of study
 - Different in food and prayer habits
- ▶ Work relationships
 - Safeguarded king's officials; saved wise men
 - Asked no favours from king; spoke unpopular truth
- ▶ Two positive outcomes
 - God's name glorified
 - Prosperity for the land (esp. wrt Joseph – Gen 41)

Work, Wealth & Success

- ▶ Work will result in wealth (Proverbs)
- ▶ Wealth to be shared
 - Tithe to Levites & priests
 - Enjoyed with all in household, including slaves
 - Gleanings for the poor
- ▶ Limitation on acquisition & retention (Lev 25)
 - Land owned privately, but redistributed at Jubilee
- ▶ Standard of living – Maintain at “basic”?
 - John Wesley – earn, save, give all you can;
 - Concessions for age?

Work needs the Balance of Rest

▶ Two mandates for Sabbath

- Genesis mandate: work & rest (Ex 20:8-11)
- Liberation mandate (Dt 5:12-15)

▶ Why rest is Important?

- Recuperation, Ego-containment
- Servants, animals, the land

▶ Parallel with Salvation Rest (Heb 4:1-11)

- Resting from wandering, not from nation building
- Resting from works for salvation (a blow to pride)

Consummation



Work & stewardship will be judged

- ▶ Stewardship parables always involve
 - Return of the master
 - Performance evaluation
 - Rewards (generally with greater responsibility)
- ▶ Unjust work will be punished (Rev 18)
 - Kings, Merchants & Sea captains who serviced Babylon

Work will be restored to glory

- ▶ Culture has a place in heaven (Rev 21:24)
- ▶ Stewardship will be endorsed (parables)
- ▶ Work will lose its frustration in prosperity (Amos 9:13)
- ▶ Work for God will not be in vain (1Cor 15:58)
- ▶ Weapons of war into implements of peace (Mic 4:3-4)

Conclusions

- ▶ To work is to reflect God's image
- ▶ Work is relativized by rest
- ▶ The Fall creates frustration & injustice
- ▶ Stewardship is an important part of work
- ▶ We should choose carefully the work we do
- ▶ Work has eternal consequences

Questions for Discussion

- ▶ What are the criteria we most commonly use to choose our work?
- ▶ Should we try to be witnesses in all types of work or are some types more “valid”?
- ▶ How can we promote greater justice in the world thro’ the work we have been trained for?
- ▶ Should we consider full time ministry as an option before other choices?
- ▶ How can the church increase the emphasis it places on work and our role in it?

LIFESTYLE & PLACE



Creation



Garden Bounty (Gen 1-4)

- ▶ Man's original home a garden
 - God's bountiful provision
 - Man's co-operation with God in nurture
 - Vegetarianism – less resource depletion
- ▶ Cities & Civilization also a natural progression
 - Increase of complexity & social organization
 - In general, greater chance of autonomy, injustice (first city built by Cain)
 - Cities can sometimes relieve the burden on nature

Poverty Eradication

- ▶ “No poor among you” (Dt 15:4)
- ▶ Agrarian economy in promised land
- ▶ Some rules:
 - Redistribution of land at Jubilee (every 50 yrs)
 - Not harvesting entire crop (“gleanings” for poor)

Simple Lifestyle

▶ For our spirituality

- Dependent (Creation) & Pilgrims (Consummation)

▶ For the poor

- "Rich Christians in an age of Hunger" – Ron Sider
- Note: Rich man & Lazarus

▶ For the planet

- (i) Resource depletion; (ii) Environmental pollution

▶ How to achieve?

- NOT legalism; BUT "Loving defiance of each other"

Inter-generational justice

▶ Inheritance?

- In OT, was accompanied by land redistribution
- Can it be justified without redistribution?

▶ Family fortunes?

- A "see-saw" model?

▶ Environmental justice: sustainable development

Fall



Cities & Civilization

- ▶ Tendency towards autonomy
 - Tower of Babel (Gen 11)
- ▶ Link between Prosperity & Wickedness
 - Lot's choice for Sodom – *pitched* tents (Gen 13:10-13)
 - Abraham left Ur and *moved* his tents (Gen 12,13)
- ▶ The evils of centralization
 - Solomon's administration – prosperity (2 Chr 9)
 - Rebellion of the Northern kingdom (2 Chr 10)

Structural Injustice

▶ City vs Country

- Is the city prosperous at the expense of the rest?
- Greater protection for the city
- More opportunities in city

▶ Inner city and Belt of poverty

- Slums and shanties due to urban drift
- Bishop John Shephard ("Bias to the Poor")

Where shall I live?

- ▶ More developed countries? (greener pastures)
 - Is prosperity linked to wickedness?
- ▶ Gated communities?
 - High quality of relationships within
 - BUT cut off from the poor & marginalized
 - Not advocated for social cohesion
- ▶ Outside the city?
 - More affordable
 - Better quality of relationships (people & nature)
 - Less resources and opportunities

Redemption



Incarnation: General

▶ God making his home with us

- Emmanuel – God with us (Mt 1:23)
- Word became flesh & dwelt among us (Jn 1:14)
- Vulnerable – not of this world (Jn 18:36)

▶ Sent by the Father

- As an “other” among others (Jn 1:10-11)
- Pattern & basis for mission (Jn 20:21)

Incarnation: Specific

▶ Places in Jesus' life

- Place of birth insignificant (Bethlehem)
- Lived in hotbed of revolution (Nazareth, Galilee)
- Killed in capital city (Jerusalem)

[Many prophets lived outside, killed within city (Mt 23:37)]

▶ Lifestyle: counter-cultural

- Nowhere to lay his head during ministry
- Sermon on the Mount: "do not be like them" (Mt 5-7)
(to be different from Pharisees, heathen)

Mission

- ▶ To GO, journey, leave
 - Moving out of comfort zone
 - Creates dependence on God
 - Causes vulnerable interaction with “others”
- ▶ Christian church has history of mission
 - Paul’s journeys (Acts)
 - Gospel of Jesus
 - Education & Health & Development
 - Critiqued for changing an existing pattern (but change will occur anyway)

Thinking about Mission

- ▶ Can/should be done even at “home”; however
 - It requires the leaving of comfort zones
 - Does not give full experience of being an outsider
- ▶ Mission station either within or outside nation
 - Changing demographics of Christian mission
 - Mission station is normally (not always) difficult
- ▶ Mission stationing can be for a period in life
 - E.g. beginning or end of working life
 - Mission through career postings

Consummation



Nature & Culture

- ▶ Both Nature (Rom 8:19-22) and Culture (Rev 21:22-27) are Redeemed
- ▶ Both garden & city are found in New Jerusalem (Rev 22:1-5)
- ▶ Hence, no intrinsic privileging of either garden or city

Christian Counter-culture

- ▶ Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12)
 - Introduce the Sermon on the Mount
 - Point to the consummation (“..they will...”)
- ▶ Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7)
 - Manifesto for Christian lifestyle (present)
 - Witness to the life to come

Conclusions

- ▶ Simplicity should be a hallmark of lifestyle
- ▶ We should reduce poverty and inequality
- ▶ There is structural injustice across various geographical locations
- ▶ The incarnation teaches us that where we live is an important life choice
- ▶ A mission attitude should force us to wander
- ▶ Our lifestyles should be a witness to the life to come

Questions for Discussion

- ▶ Is it wrong to inherit property from parents?
- ▶ What are the criteria we most commonly use to choose where we live?
- ▶ Are there places we should try to live in; or avoid living in?
- ▶ Can we become a part of missions, by our choice of work or abode?
- ▶ How can we encourage each other to live more simply, especially so that poverty is reduced?