

The Case for the Christian Family

*The Covenantal Solution for the
Dissolving American Family*

JARED LONGSHORE

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*For Eric, Brenda, Arthur, and Rhoda.
We thank God for you, your faith,
and your covenant faithfulness.*

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Introduction

The argument of this book is quite simple. The brass tacks solution to the dissolving American family is a recovery of the covenant household. Without such a recovery, the storm of secularism will wash away what is left of our eroding homes. Many Christians in the United States feel a bit like Davy Crockett and the Texans surrounded by Santa Anna at the Alamo. I thank God for the courage of these faithful conservatives. They stand ready to fight and die, win or lose. But I commend a plan to win in these pages. You, of course, will still have to die. We are Christians. We take up the cross. But there is a world of difference between dying in defeat and dying in victory.

The spirit of the age animates its devotees more vehemently than in days gone by. We are in a season of reaping. You can see the fruitful labors of these invisible ugly *isms* on nearly every segment of the nightly news.

But these demons have been sowing their doctrines in our land for decades. Christians have imbibed too much of their teaching and it has undone our families. We reap what we have sown and the only creatures pleased with the harvest are dung beetles. The putrid aroma wafting over the fields serves as an unsavory testimony to the fact that we are not doing it right. We cannot be mad that Joe Biden's Department of Children and Families will soon knock on our door to inform us that our children do not belong to us anymore. We have been raising orphans for years, long before the state agreed with our general sentiment that our children are bastards.

This book is a call for the vast majority of American evangelicals to go in a new direction, albeit it is an old path. But that path is long overgrown with oaks, palmettos, and shrubs of various kinds. Many have forgotten this old covenantal road. Others have never heard of it even though our fathers walked it faithfully for centuries. We, however, are deep into the forest now. So my tool of choice for the journey before us is a machete, not a scalpel. When you are finished with this book, I make no promise that you will be out of the woods. If you insist on *seeing the end* of this path before walking it, then you may be unsatisfied with the work you hold in your hands. If, on the other hand, you are willing to walk by faith and not by sight like our father Abraham, then this book may give you just the clarity you need to head out with your family in a new and better direction—"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to

1 **Covenant Lost**

Your Children Don't

Belong to You Anymore

In this first chapter, I'm attempting a bit of shock and awe. I'm going to say something that should give you a jolt. After the jolt, I want to explore a bit to discover how we got into such troubled waters. The culprit will not be something entirely outside of us that we can point our finger at in an act of self-justification. The ultimate culprit for example is not Hilary Clinton saying, "It takes a village . . . your children belong to us, you deplorables." I do not deny that she is a threat. I contend that she is more. She is a troubling manifestation of our own ideology. By "our" in the previous sentence, I mean run-of-the-mill conservative Christians who still make up a majority of these United States. The truth is we gave birth to Hillary Clinton. She is the fruit of that drunken night when we went to bed

with hollow philosophy, vain deceit, the tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world (Col. 2:8).

If we are upset with the outcome, and we ought to be upset with the outcome, then we need to get out of that idolatrous bed. I'll help get us moving quicker from that bed with the aforementioned jolt: Legally speaking, your children don't belong to you anymore. That's how a legal friend of mine put it to me. The family has been dissolved as far as modern legal interpretation is concerned. This dissolution of the family will be further explained shortly. Before getting there, I admit that the total erosion of the family will take time to manifest itself in judicial decisions and the Living God can always turn things around. But the leaven is in the lump. Here's how it went down.

Everyone decided to heed Lennon when he said to imagine there is no heaven above us and no hell below us. We imagined that which is contrary to reality. To run the basics again, there indeed is a heaven above us and a hell below us. Lennon told us to pretend, and we decided to imagine with him. We forgot the actual state of things and decided to live contrary to nature. We discovered that once you start to live contrary to nature, the result is Berkley Law professors on the floor of the United States Senate insisting that men can get pregnant.¹ You can play the imagine game with more than just heaven and hell.

1. Jo Yurcaba, "Law professor Khiara Bridges calls Sen. Josh Hawley's questions about pregnancy 'transphobic.'" NBC News, July 13, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-politics-and-policy/law-professor-khiara-bridges-calls-sen-josh-hawleys-questions-pregnanc-rcna38015>.

2 Covenant Marriage

What God Has Joined Together

So chapter 1 was a sober warning: Legally speaking your children don't belong to you anymore. This tragic legal situation stems from the ungodly Supreme Court decision *Obergefell v. Hodges*. This degeneration is no surprise to us. If you don't get marriage right, then you can't get parenting right. But *Obergefell* itself stemmed from a worldview that disregarded heaven and the God who bows those heavens and comes down riding the cherub (Ps. 18:9-10).

Now you can still find people who will say that marriage is sacred. So if we would rouse man from his secular slumbers, then marriage is at least an opportunity for us to get our foot in the door. In spite of the assault we have leveled against this holy institution, you still have men and women walking away from a wedding ceremony knowing they

tasted something potent. They may not be able to put their finger on it, but they were moved. By what? Well, the wind coming off the cherub's wing of course. God descended in their midst and made a covenant—"He did fly upon the wings of the wind" (Ps. 18:10).

This chapter starts the recovery of what we have lost by identifying the nature and significance of covenant marriage. As noted in the introduction, the focus of this chapter is not marital roles and responsibilities. Rather I will describe marriage itself from various angles and texts of Scripture. Then I will begin to identify some of the implications of man and woman being joined together in marriage. Those implications reach farther than many know. Any recovery of the dissolving American family must start right here with covenant marriage.

We might begin by coming at it from this angle. Marriage is more than the product of the will (the intent) of the parties involved. We are so steeped in our secular humanism that we really have taken on a sense of deity. We think that we are the sole creators of things. We have forgotten the fundamental truth that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Applied to marriage, we think marriage is something we create and God subsequently blesses. For instance, you could find many Christians saying that same-sex marriage is a real marriage that God won't bless. But such an expression signals a critical misunderstanding of the very nature of marriage. Same-sex marriage is not a marriage that God will not bless. Regardless of the intent of the parties, same-sex marriage is simply no marriage at all.

3 Covenant Grace

To Be God to You and Your Children

The Bible says a good deal about covenant marriage, and if you survey Scripture on the topic of marriage, you will find that marriage between one man and one woman is not the only marriage we hear about. We also hear about God's covenant marriage with his bride:

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you. (Jer. 3:14)

For thy Maker is thine husband; The Lord of hosts is his name; And thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. (Isa. 54:5)

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Rev. 21:2)

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:31-32)

God's marriage to his people is likened to a man's marriage to his wife. These are two covenants. The former is God's covenant of grace with his covenant people. The latter is a marriage covenant between man and woman that God himself establishes. These two covenants, the covenant of grace and the marriage covenant, are not unrelated. We know this to be the case already from Malachi 2. The men of Judah profaned the covenant of their fathers (Mal. 2:10), and they did so by marrying the daughters of a strange god (Mal. 2:11). The result was that such men were "cut off" out of "the tabernacles of Jacob" (Mal. 2:12). So a man's outright unfaithfulness in his marriage covenant resulted in him being cut off from God's gracious covenant with his bride. Moreover, such sin transgressed God's original design for "holy seed."

Chapter 2 signaled the relationship between covenant marriage and the covenant of grace. However, we still need a full definition of the covenant of grace, as well as an analysis of the organic relationship it maintains with covenant marriage. The main thread of this book is that the solution to the dissolving American family is a recovery of the covenant house. But there will be no genuine recovery of the covenant house without a recovery of God's covenant with his house, the covenant of grace.

4 Covenant Children

A Heritage from the Lord

In this chapter, I will cite several texts regarding God’s promises to the Christian’s children. But it is important to see that these promises come to us via covenant. They are covenant promises. In this sense, this chapter builds upon the previous ones. I should underscore this point. There is one approach to Christian childrearing that says, “The promises of God are *announced* to my children in a special way. They are *directed* to my children if my children would have them.” This approach says, “My children can be on the team if they so choose. God commands them to join and welcomes them to join if they’d like.” Then, there is a second approach to parenting which says, “The promise of grace in and by Christ is *upon* my children, sealed and covenanted to them and fulfilled by faith.” This approach says, “My children are

on the team and God's promises to the team are bound to them by covenant and kept by faith." I do not object to everything in the former. But I am advocating for the latter.

These covenantal promises will reorient our parenting. And we need to be reoriented. We have established that the family is in a bad way in our society. It has been hacked up ideologically for a long time. We are so far down the line that our legal system has gone over the cliff when it comes to the family. "You can't put toothpaste back in the tube" is a phrase that comes to mind. But so does, "with man it is impossible but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 10:26). This chapter will consider what covenant children are, what covenant promises God makes to them, and a common objection to the claim that the Christian's natural children are members of the New Covenant with its promises sealed to them. But before we get into the details, consider again just how far we have fallen.

In 1950 less than 5 percent of Americans were born out of wedlock. Back then such a child was called a bastard. People now view this term as a derogatory slur. But the word means that a particular child is illegitimate, born out of wedlock. Before the radical change in our legal system, the two basic categories regarding a child's status were legitimate and illegitimate. These categories are biblical, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Heb. 12:7-8). So a legitimate child was one born

5 Covenant Kingdom

Let the Children Come to Me

We started in chapter 1 with the troubling truth that legally speaking our children do not belong to us anymore. This legal development is downstream from an a-covenantal approach to the family that evangelicals have imbibed far and wide. If we would rectify our ongoing legal and cultural train wreck, then we must recover the covenantal household. Chapter 2 addressed covenant marriage which stands at the center of the covenant household and covenant children. Chapter 3 demonstrated that marriage between one man and one woman is not the only covenant marriage that exists. Human marriage testifies to another very real marriage, the marriage between Christ and his bride, the church. Both of these covenants are more real than modern man thinks. There are clear parties involved, clear promises

and stipulations, real bonds established, and an organic relationship between the two. Chapter 4 surveyed various covenant promises regarding covenant children, further establishing that the Christian's covenant children are included among God's covenant people, the bride of Christ.

We now need to consider the implications for the covenant household. Take a normal family, let's call them the Robertsons. We have a real marriage between Mr. and Mrs. Robertson, and we have three Robertson children. This family is a Christian home, a covenant household. The Robertsons go to church on Sunday. The Robertsons worship the Triune God. The littlest of the Robertsons are included in this covenant household which is related to God covenantally. The question now is, "What relationship does this covenant household have to the house and kingdom of God?"

The Westminster Confession of Faith says,

The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. (WCF 25:2)

The visible church is called "the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ." The children of those who profess the true religion are in that visible church. These children are in