Bob: As a follower of Jesus, marriage ought to mean more to you than it does to your neighbor, who doesn’t go to church. Here’s Dr. Al Mohler.

Al: When we see a wedding, we see more than the world sees at a wedding. They see a party of two people coming together—and that’s all we can say now, in terms of the world, of two people coming together. Frankly, for right now, at least, we can say, “two”; but for how long can we say, “two”? But for right now, all the world can say is that: “Two people are getting together for the length of time that both of them find mutually advantageous in order to identify with one another, and this is the party that,”—by the way, doesn’t imply that they have not been coupling until now—but merely says, “This is when we’re throwing a party.”

When Christians go to a wedding, what we see is a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Thursday, December 29th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. Is there anything we can be doing, as followers of Christ, to make marriage more meaningful in our culture than it is today?

We’ll hear from Dr. Al Mohler on that subject. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Thursday edition. I know you have spent a lot of time—I have as well—thinking about where we are in our country / in our world with regard to marriage and family. We had an opportunity, in 2016, to hear from maybe one of the preeminent scholars of our day, who really—

Dennis: That’d be better said: “...one of the preeminent prophets of our day” because this is really a truth-telling message you’re about to hear.

Bob: It’s a prophetic message; you’re right. Dr. Al Mohler came and spoke to our staff, back in late July of 2016. We took two days in late July and got the staff together for a two-day celebration of 40 years of ministry.
I have to tell you, Dennis—those two days—people have asked me, throughout the fall: “How was your 40th anniversary celebration?” I’ve said, “You know, it’s interesting to take a couple of days and start to reflect on what the last 40 years have looked like,” and you go: “There have been some significant things happen over 40 years. God’s been at work through this ministry in some pretty amazing ways!”

**Dennis:** He has; and one of the things He did, was back in 1992—was He launched a little radio program on 22 stations across the country called *FamilyLife Today,* with Bob Lepine and Dennis Rainey. [Laughter]

**Bob:** This is—our 25th birthday is coming up in 2017; isn’t it?

**Dennis:** It is coming up. We need your help in celebrating our 25th birthday. In doing so, we need you to give a gift. What do you do at a birthday? You give gifts; okay? [Laughter]

This gift is not to Bob / it’s not to me.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** I don’t take a penny from this broadcast. I’ve raised my own support to work, here at FamilyLife and for Cru, since 1970. In fact, Barbara and I are donors to this ministry. We believe in it, we’ve given our lives to it, give our money to it as well.

It’s time for a number of donors—who used to give but haven’t given recently, for a number of listeners who have listened for a good length of time but haven’t given, and it’s time for those who have given—to give again. If you can give, now is the time to do it; because number one, it’ll be good for you in your marriage; number two, it’ll be good for other people’s marriages and families; and number three, we need you to give to keep this broadcast on the air, doing number one and number two.

**Bob:** Yes; and this is a *critical* time for any ministry like ours.

The next four or five days will tell the tale about what we’re able to do in 2017.

**Dennis:** That’s right.

**Bob:** We recently had to make the decision that we would go off the air in a few cities where *FamilyLife Today* is heard. It’s because we had not heard from listeners, and we have to be good stewards of the funds that are available. When you don’t hear from enough listeners, you have to say, “Okay; it seems like we should not be investing the funding here.” It’s a difficult decision to make as a ministry. We hope not to have to do it in 2017. What happens between now and midnight on New Year’s Eve will go a long way in helping to determine that.
Now, the good news is—when you make a donation today we still have money available in our matching gift fund. You’ve heard us talking about it this month. Any donation you make is going to be effectively tripled because if you make a donation of $25 that frees up $50 from the matching gift fund. You make a $100 donation it frees up $200 from the matching gift fund so you can see how any donation today will be significant in helping us toward our year-end need.

So we’d like to ask you today to make a year-end contribution. You can do that easily, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY to make a yearend donation. Or you can mail your donation to FamilyLife Today at PO Box 7111, Little Rock, AR; our zip code is 72223.

Now, we’re going to hear today Part Two of the message we heard, back in the summer, from Dr. Al Mohler about the condition of marriage and family in our culture. One of the interesting observations that Dr. Mohler made in this message is how culture shifted in the ’60s and the ’70s, here in the United States. It shifted our thinking about marriage and family, and gender, and sexuality.

During that time, in many cases, the Christian community did not step up and say: “Hold on! These are serious issues that need to be explored, and addressed, and looked at biblically.”

[Recorded Message]

**AI:** So here’s the good news—over the last 40 years, perhaps out of desperation, Christians have begun to ask, “What exactly does the Bible say?” and to develop a biblical theology that helps us to understand why marriage isn’t just good / it’s glorious—and why the family isn’t just a good idea / why it’s indispensable to human happiness. We’ve also learned to read the Bible in a new way. We’ve learned to read the Bible in a new way because we’ve moved from understanding that studying the Bible is just studying verses to understanding that studying the Bible is studying every word of Scripture in the flow of the biblical story.

That story has four major parts, because every worldview has to answer four absolutely unavoidable questions. The first is, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” The answer to that is the very first movement of Scripture in creation—it begins with, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” That begins the entire worldview; because, as B.B. Warfield—the great Princeton theologian—said: “If God started it, then it’s all His.” If He created it then it’s all His. If God, indeed, is the Creator; then He determines what everything means that will ever exist.

The goodness of creation is the first and foremost lesson, but embedded in the goodness of creation—in Genesis, Chapter 2, is the acknowledgment that God’s plan
from the very beginning—as Jesus would say in the Gospel of Matthew—is in creating the one creature made in His image, human beings, who would be made, not only for God’s glory, but who would be made for each other. As Jesus said, it was God’s plan from the beginning in making them male and female.

“Do you not know the Scriptures?”—said Jesus—“that is why the Lord said in Genesis, Chapter 2: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and hold fast to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed [paraphrased from Matthew 19:4-5].”

Jesus said, “Do you not know that that was God’s purpose from the very beginning?” When you look at that, you recognize that the confusion of our age over gender, the confusion of our age over what it means to be male and female/man and woman—or whether that means anything—is decisively entered in Scripture, not just in terms of the fact that this is true—but that it’s true to the glory of God, who created the human being, male and female, as the only creature made in His image. From the very beginning, He created the woman for the man, and He created marriage as the institution which the man and the woman would come together, both made in the image of God/but displaying the glory of God.

In marriage, that becomes so important that the primal bond—you would think might be the strongest bond of all between parent and child—is made secondary to the bond between husband and wife: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife [emphasis added].” Then, of course, you have the family, right there in Genesis, Chapter 1/Chapter 1, verse 28, and the mandate, “Go forth and multiply and fill the earth.”

But the second chapter of the biblical story is the second question every worldview must answer: “What’s gone wrong?” This is where the biblical worldview answers immediately in Genesis, Chapter 3, about the reality of sin. Thus we come to understand that life in a world that is now affected by sin and a creation that is corrupted by sin in such a way that even the good things God has given us are injured by the reality of human sin.

But just as the image of God is not obliterated by human sin—

—we are still made in the image of God—and that is why we can still know Him. That is why the Lord still dealt with Adam and with Eve; and that is why God continued, in a succession of covenants, to deal with His people. Even though the image of God has been corrupted, it is not obliterated. So also, the glory of marriage is corrupted by sin; but it isn’t obliterated. The goodness of marriage continues to show through—show through so much, as a matter of fact, that the Bible makes clear that marriage—that demonstrated the glory of God in Eden—is even more important east of Eden. That’s
why, in the Book of Common Prayer, marriage is referred to in the marriage service that we all basically use—we just shortened it—marriage is defined as a remedy for sin.

Paul will talk about this in First Corinthians, Chapter 7, when he says—“...better to marry than to burn.”

Then we have an entire Scriptural testimony about the importance of marriage and the importance of family. You turn to a text like Ephesians, Chapter 6—and in Ephesians, Chapter 6, Paul writing to Christians—for example, he writes not only about the relationship between husbands and wives, but between parents and children. “Children,” in verse 6—Chapter 6, verse 1—“obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother.” And then Paul writes, “This is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land,”—live long.

It’s really amazing, when you think about it. See, here, Paul is going back to the Ten Commandments—he goes back to Moses, he goes back to the mountain, he goes back to the giving of the law, and he goes back to the commandment—obeying father and mother. He says, “You know, that was the first commandment with a promise, that ‘you will live long.’”

Then he points to this—and you realize this is centuries after Sinai—and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul’s writing here to Christians, God’s New Covenant people—he was writing to the people of the New Covenant, mentioning the Law of the Old Covenant, making very clear that the goodness of marriage and the importance of the family and the right ordering whereby children obey their parents is so important that that first commandment that was given with a promise continues in the church, and the promise continues as well.

In other words, God’s people, even in the midst of a sinful world, have absolutely no excuse, since we have the Word of God in the inerrant and infallible Scripture—we have absolutely no excuse not to know, not only that marriage is the life-long, monogamous, faithful union of a man and a woman, but also that the family is made up of those who will come to them by reproduction and by adoption—

—and that it is good—not merely because it has sociological benefits and leads to social and cultural and civilization stability—but because it shows the glory of God in such a way that the children who were raised in those homes, to the glory of God, receive benefits and blessings that include length of life, by the promise of God.

The third question has to be asked of every worldview—every worldview has to answer this: “What can be done? What’s the answer?” This is where every major religious worldview has to say: “Here’s what we believe is the path to enlightenment,” or “This is what we believe is the answer that leads to salvation.”
This is where the Scripture speaks to us very clearly, that “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” “He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, in order that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

The Scripture answers—that the answer of how to get out of the problem of sin is nothing that we can do, but something that God unilaterally has done for us in Christ—in His death, burial, and resurrection—and is offered to us by faith / to those who will believe and repent of their sins.

It is made very, very clear that the way out is nothing that we can do, but only that we come by faith to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and have our sins forgiven. We come to understand that the problem is not merely sociological / it’s certainly not merely historical, or economic, or political—it is theological / it is sin—and we can’t solve that problem. We can’t even partially solve that problem. It has to be entirely, unilaterally done by a sovereign and gracious God, who brings glory to Himself through the salvation of those who were His very enemies when He saved us.

Now that points to something else. That means that inside the church / inside the family of faith there is to be an acknowledged accountability that we do not expect in the world. When we see a wedding, we see more than the world sees in a wedding. They see a party of two people coming together for the length of time that both of them find mutually advantageous in order to identify with one another. This is the party that—by the way, doesn’t imply that they have not been coupling until now—but merely says, “This is when we’re throwing a party.”

When Christians go to a wedding, what we see is a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ—it’s a fundamental difference. I have to go back to 1976 and I have to wonder, “How many Christians, going to a wedding of two Christians inside the Christian church—how many of them understood how different this was then from the other weddings that were taking place?” because the other weddings that were taking place in the 1970s looked pretty much like our weddings.

What am I saying?

I’m saying that, when this ministry began, the Christian church was far too dependent upon the culture to uphold marriage / far too dependent upon mores, and social structures, and cultural pressure to maintain marriage—we just took it for granted.

We can’t take it for granted anymore. The first place it must be recovered is in the body of Christ, where we understand that every single marriage, rightly ordered / every single wedding we come to celebrate, as a profoundly counter-cultural act, in which, not just
two people—a man and a woman / a husband and a wife—but the body of Christ is coming together to celebrate the goodness of what God has given over against a world that is increasingly giving itself to darkness: “Here’s light.”

But that also means that, when the body of Christ comes together—and we think about marriage and we think about family—we really are accountable to Scripture and to all that Scripture reveals.

We’ve come to understand that marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church. We come to understand that the family—with a mother and a father and their children—and even the extension of family / aunts and uncles, and cousins, and grandparents, and all the rest—is a picture of the church. How can we expect our churches to be rightly ordered if the first church is not rightly ordered?

We also come to understand—because the gospel is so much at issue—we come to understand that this isn’t just about us—oh, it is about us, and it’s about our discipleship, and our faithfulness to God / it’s about the fact that we come to understand our responsibility—as husbands and as wives, and as mothers and as fathers, and as church members—to uphold each other in faithfulness and to hold each other accountable in faithfulness. Even in the discipline and in the right raising of our children and the nurturing and admonition of the Lord, but there’s more to it than us.

The world is watching—a world that thinks of marriage as a domestic concentration camp, a world that thinks of marriage as a lifestyle expression, a world that thinks of marriage as something infinitely malleable and re-arrangeable. It’s actually a gospel witness that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ maintains marriage to the glory of God, under the Lordship of Christ. It’s actually a gospel act of evangelism, in effect, whereby we make very clear: “We didn't come up with this. We’re not committed to this, because we’re old-fashioned. Ultimately, we’re not primarily committed to family values. We’re committed to the Lordship of Christ. This is, at least in part, what that looks like.”

There’s a fourth question every worldview has to answer; and that is, “How does the story end?” Really interesting—there is a veritable industry of books about the end.

Last night, I was in a bookstore, here in Little Rock, for just a few minutes, trying to find something. What I saw was a title: How to Survive the Apocalypse. [Laughter] Well, you better sell those books now—[Laughter]—I mean, they’re not going to be worth a whole lot when it actually happens. When the apocalypse takes place, no one’s going to survive it. [Laughter] Do you realize the body of Christ is not going to survive the apocalypse? We’re going to be glorified in it—it’s not surviving. And those, who are not in Christ, are not going to survive the apocalypse.
But you know, even as the secular world’s trying to figure out how everything ends, we
know how it ends. Marriage, oddly—no; by the Christian biblical worldview,
expectedly—is right here in the picture.

Revelation, Chapter 19, beginning at verse 6:

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like
the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of
thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty,
reigns. Let us exult and rejoice and give Him the glory, for the
marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself
ready.”

It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure,
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, “Write this, ‘Blessed are those who are
invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me,
“These are the true words of God.”

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him; but he said to me, “You
must not do that; I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers
who hold up the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the
testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Marriage/family—you can’t begin the Bible without getting to marriage very quickly.

When the Bible ends, it ends with a marriage supper of the Lamb. And thus till Jesus
comes, may His church be found bearing testimony to the goodness of all that He has
given us, first and foremost to the infinite, unspeakable goodness of the Savior who has
been given to us by a sovereign and a loving God, and the salvation that is found in His
name and in His name alone.

May we also be found unhesitant, consistently, always joyfully pointing to the goodness
of everything God has given us in creation, and to the flourishing that inevitably comes
by receiving God’s good gifts exactly as they are given us, beginning with marriage and
with family. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the new family of faith, in which the
fatherless find a father and no one is without family.

May we do so until Jesus comes, and may we do it with joy.

[Studio]
Bob: Well again, today we’ve heard Part Two of Dr. Al Mohler’s message on marriage and family given at our 40th anniversary celebration, back in July. Hearing it again just reminds me of how fundamental/how foundational marriage and family is to what God is doing on planet earth. If we don’t get marriage and family right, we can’t get much right beyond that.

Dennis: There’s a lot of government today that exists to take the place of and repair broken families. Frankly, the Christian community needs to address some of these issues we’re talking about today. That’s what we do, here on FamilyLife Today. If, after listening to a message like that, you say, “You know, that message needs to be heard by a lot of people,” well, you know what? It just was.

If you’re a donor, you just helped make it possible.

Bob: That’s right.

Dennis: Would you like to be a part of this ministry?—a transformational ministry, that occurs at the grassroots level, in marriages and families all across the country. If so, now is the time to give.

Bob: You can donate, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY to make a yearend contribution. You can also mail your contribution to us at FamilyLife Today at PO Box 7111, Little Rock, AR; and our zip code is 72223. Again, we do appreciate your standing with us at the end of 2016.

I also want to mention—if you’d like to view Dr. Mohler’s message in its entirety, the video is available on our website at FamilyLifeToday.com. You can also look for information about a book called We Cannot Be Silent that Dr. Mohler has written. I think it’s a very helpful book on all kinds of cultural issues that are clashing with the Bible and clashing with our faith.

So, look for information on Dr. Mohler’s book, We Cannot Be Silent, when you go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com.

Now, tomorrow, we’re going to continue to talk about God’s design for marriage by hearing a message from Dennis Rainey about what God has intended, all along, when it comes to the marriage covenant. That comes up tomorrow. Hope you can tune in for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas.
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