



# A Biblical Theology of Motherhood

JAMES. M. HAMILTON, JR.



James M. Hamilton, Jr. (Ph. D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary)

serves as Associate Professor of Biblical Theology at Southern Seminary and as Preaching Pastor at Kenwood Baptist Church. He is the author of *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgement* (Crossway), *God's Indwelling Presence* (B&H), *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches* (Crossway), and can be found blogging at [jimhamilton.wordpress.com](http://jimhamilton.wordpress.com). Dr. Hamilton is blessed to be married to the woman of his dreams, and their four children are like olive shoots around his table.

## A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MOTHERHOOD

Gazing out the window, Bellatrix despised what she saw—those smiling saps with all the children. And at the center of the melee was Prudentia. Dopey grin, doting husband on her arm, and the swarm of children crowding her home with children of their own. Bellatrix looked smugly from the window to the mirror. She had been the most sought after single in the village. Now approaching 70, she considered herself well preserved. Dodged the pain of childbirth and still thought highly of her figure. Having avoided the clutter of kids, her domicile was kempt and calm. Now a widow, the feast day found her untroubled, unharried by duties and noise. No one for whom she must play the slave, no one to clean up after, no one to trouble her calm: she was alone.

## NOT GOOD FOR MAN TO BE ALONE

What is a biblical theology of mother-

hood? A biblical theology of anything seeks to describe both the storyline and the network of assumptions and presuppositions and beliefs assumed by the biblical authors as they wrote. The only access we have to what the biblical authors thought or assumed is what they wrote. When we pursue biblical theology, what we are trying to get at is the worldview reflected in the assumptions of the biblical authors, the worldview from which their statements spring, the worldview in which their statements make sense.<sup>1</sup> If we are trying to establish a biblical theology of motherhood, we want to see how motherhood fits in the plot of the Bible's big story, how it interacts with other aspects of the story, and how these things shed light on the direct statements about motherhood in the songs of the Psalmists, the Proverbs of the sages, and the instructions of the apostles. Story and statements inform one another, each expositing, affirming, and explaining the other. This study will begin with motherhood in the Bible's story before considering the Bible's statements about motherhood.

## MOTHERHOOD IN THE BIBLE'S STORY

The Bible's story begins with a statement that the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head (Gen 3:15), and ends with a depiction of a dragon trying to devour a woman and her male child (Rev 12:1–17). That child, the seed of the woman, is the Bible's main character,<sup>2</sup>

and his life depends on his mother giving birth to him. From this alone it can be seen that motherhood is vital to the main plot of the Bible, but it is not the main plot alone to which motherhood is vital.

The very first man and woman were told to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). Fatherhood and motherhood, then, are fundamental human responsibilities. It's the first thing God said to Adam and Eve after he blessed them. Adam and Eve must be fruitful and multiply to do the next thing God told them to do: "fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion" (1:28). The two of them alone would not be able to fill the earth, subdue it, and exercise dominion. Motherhood is vital to the mandate God gave to humanity to fill, subdue, and rule the earth.

God put the man in the garden to work and keep it (2:15), and he put the woman there to help the man (2:18, 20). Both bear the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27), and they cannot accomplish their task apart from one another. Specifically, humanity cannot do what God commanded apart from motherhood.

The woman was not on the scene when the prohibition not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was given (Gen 2:17), but the death threatened upon transgression of the prohibition would stop Adam and Eve from multiplying, filling, and ruling over the earth. Death would also stop the man from working and keeping the garden, and the woman from helping him. Humanity must obey God's command if they are to accomplish God's purpose, if they are to fill and subdue the earth. Disobedience will disable them: they cannot do what God has commanded apart from obedience to God's one command that they not eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

They did not obey. But for God's mercy, death would have stopped motherhood before it ever started.

When the serpent tempted the woman, he contradicted the idea that transgression would result in death (Gen 3:4; cf. 2:17). God set the boundaries, and God stated what would happen should the boundaries be transgressed. By denying the consequence of transgression, the serpent tried to write his own story within the one God was telling. For obvious reasons, the serpent's project will fail. God is the one who has brought the

story into being by his words, and the mere words of the serpent will not prevail against those God has spoken.

God called the man and woman to himself after they transgressed. The serpent he cursed (Gen 3:14–15), and he made the roles given to the man and woman more difficult (3:16–19). The woman's part in being fruitful and multiplying was made difficult because of the added pain in childbearing, and her role of helping her husband was complicated by a new desire to control him (Gen 3:16).<sup>3</sup> The curse hit the woman precisely at the point of motherhood: God's curse stands against motherhood physically and relationally. Physically she will experience pain in childbearing; relationally she no longer wants to submit but control. One aspect of the story of redemption is motherhood, where God's mercy and blessing soar over his curse against sin so that in place of death he gives life.

God threw the promise of life in the face of death even as he spoke the curse over the serpent. Only the serpent heard the words "cursed are you" (Gen 3:14). He also heard that God would put enmity between himself and the woman, between his seed and hers. He, the serpent, would bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, but that seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head (3:15).

God went on to address the woman and then the man (3:16–19), but words of life had been launched against death: God stated in Genesis 2:17, "in the day you eat from it, dying you shall die." Now the man and woman have eaten of that tree, and in the words spoken to the serpent the man and woman hear that they will not die physically that very day. Instead, in the curse on the serpent they hear that they will have seed. Not only will their lives continue, they will have children. They will multiply, and the seed of the woman<sup>4</sup> will strike the head of the serpent, where mortal blows are landed, suffering a strike to the heel, which does not typically lead to death.

Having narrated God's justice against the transgressors, and his promise of mercy (that the man and woman will not die but instead have a seed who will do more damage to the serpent than the serpent does to him), Moses immediately narrates the man's response, a response that shows the significance of motherhood:

“And the man named his wife ‘Eve,’ for she was the mother of all the living” (Gen 3:20). Adam responded in faith to the word of judgment God spoke over the serpent.<sup>5</sup> Adam believed that God had spoken justice to the serpent, and in that just word he heard a promise of life for himself, the soon to be named Eve, and their seed.

If the woman does not become a mother, the serpent will not have his head crushed. God’s justice against the woman, pain in childbearing (Gen 3:16), makes triumph difficult but not impossible. Motherhood makes the world’s salvation possible. Indeed, the world’s salvation will only come through motherhood.

This side of the curses narrated in Genesis 3:14–19, motherhood is a mercy. Promised to none, none deserve it; none have earned it. None can justly expect or demand to experience it. Death was deserved, and God upheld justice but also extended the mercy of motherhood.<sup>6</sup> Motherhood is a sacred privilege granted by God’s good pleasure.

The account of Eve’s reaction to the births of Cain and Seth shows that she fully understood the significance of motherhood, the significance of the seed given to her. When Cain was born, “she said, ‘I have gotten a man with the help of Yahweh’” (Gen 4:1). By murdering Abel, Cain shows himself not to be seed of the woman but seed of the serpent (4:8). As a result he hears the same words, “cursed are you” (4:11), that his father the devil had heard (3:14; cf. John 8:44; 1 John 3:9–12). Eve’s words at the birth of Seth show that she understands this: “And she called his name ‘Seth,’ for ‘God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel, for Cain killed him’” (4:25). Eve seems to be looking for the seed of the woman who will conquer the serpent.

The promise of the seed provokes the concern to preserve the genealogical line of descent: the genealogies testify to the hope for the promised seed of the woman, and Genesis 5 traces the line of descent from Adam to Noah through ten generations (Gen 5:1–32). Motherhood makes a genealogy possible.

In the midst of the Genesis 5 genealogy, Lamech’s words at the birth of Noah indicate that these people are looking for the seed of the woman who will visit the blow to the serpent’s skull: “This one will give us rest from our work and from the pain of our hands from

the ground, which Yahweh, he cursed it” (Gen 5:29; cf. 3:17–19). Eve’s words at the births of Cain and Seth testify to hope for the promised skull crushing seed. Lamech’s words indicate that those who believe God’s promise about the seed of the woman also think his conquest will roll back the curse on the land, reopening the way to Eden, the presence of God, the blessed life.<sup>7</sup>

Another motherhood-made-possible-genealogy in Genesis 11 tracks the ten generations that stretch from Noah’s son Shem to Abram (Gen 11:10–26). Shortly after that genealogy has gotten us to Abram, however, we read that he has a barren wife (11:30). Just as God’s word prevailed over death when he spoke judgment over the serpent in Genesis 3:15, God’s word prevailed over Sarai’s barrenness when God spoke the blessing of Abram in Genesis 12:1–3.

The book of Genesis details how the blessing of Abraham was passed to his son Isaac (Gen 26:3–4), then from Isaac to Jacob (28:3–4), but for this to happen God had to grant the mercy of motherhood to barren Sarah and Rebekah (21:1; 25:21). The barrenness of these women was not the only obstacle. Through the selfish sister-fib, both Abraham and Isaac tried to give their wives away (12:10–20; 20:1–18; 26:6–11). Had they succeeded, the channel of blessing would have been forfeited. God’s promise of blessing, life, seed, stands against the physical inability of the women and the moral folly of their husbands. God blessed them, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, with the mercy of motherhood in spite of their inability and sin.

Remarkable births, births that require divine intervention, litter the landscape of the Old Testament: Rachel had difficulty becoming a mother (Gen 30:1–2), and it was only when God heard her prayer and opened her womb that Joseph was born (30:22–24).<sup>8</sup> The birth of Perez and Zerah came from circumstances that were anything but auspicious (Gen 38). Samson’s mother was barren until the angel of the Lord appeared to her, announcing that she would give birth to a Nazirite from the womb (Judg 13:2–5). The text of Ruth does not explicitly state that she was barren, but she was married to Mahlon for ten years and had no children (Ruth 1:4; 4:10). When she married Boaz, Yahweh gave her conception and she gave birth to the grandfather of David

(4:13, 17). Yahweh had closed Hannah's womb (1 Sam 1:5–6), but he heard her prayer, remembered her, and she gave birth to Samuel (1:11, 19–20).

This pattern of remarkable births, births that would not happen apart from the Lord, finds its fulfillment when Jesus the Messiah is born of Mary the virgin (Matt 1:18–23; Luke 1:34–38). No man—and I don't mean Odysseus!—fathered the Messiah. No man brought the Messiah into the world. No man ensured that the line of descent would be unbroken from Adam to Noah, from Shem to Abram, from Abram to Perez, from Perez to David through Obed, from David to the son of David, Jesus of Nazareth. God oversaw the preservation of the seed of the woman, and mothers gave birth to sons, keeping the hope alive, making the promise possible.

Without motherhood the Bible's plot goes nowhere, for its protagonist, the seed of the woman, would never have been born to triumph over the arch-antagonist, the great dragon, the ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan (Rev 12:9; cf. 12:1–5).<sup>9</sup>

We have seen that motherhood is a mercy, and from the fact that the Messiah was born of a woman (Gal 4:4), we see that motherhood is an honor. Only Mary gave birth to the Messiah himself, but every mother who bears a child experiences what she did. Every mother who bears a child brings life into the world through a near death experience. Every mother who bears a child partakes of the pangs of childbirth, and the eschatological tribulations that will issue in the new heaven and new earth are likened to birth pangs by the prophets (e.g., Isa 26:17–19), Jesus (John 16:21–22), and Paul (Rom 8:18–25). Just as the suffering of a woman brings new life into the world, so the messianic woes will give birth to a new creation.<sup>10</sup>

We can also observe that motherhood is one of the ways that God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Cor 1:27). God has ordained praise from the mouths of babes and infants because of his enemies, to silence them (Ps 8:2). A mother might not seem like a military asset, but the weak and helpless babies she brings forth are what God uses to establish his strength and silence his adversaries—not when they grow to be mighty warriors but when they voice their wordless cries, when their very lives testify that God

makes life prevail over death, blessing triumph over curse, and the infant child of the woman portends doom to the ancient dragon.

God answers Satan's defiance and disobedience with the obedient submission of a woman who does what God made her to do, helping her husband to multiply, fill, and subdue the earth, and she does that by bearing children. By means of motherhood, God answers Satan's boasts with the baby's cry. God answers Satan's pride with the humble child.

The significance of motherhood in the Bible's story should influence our reading of a passage such as 1 Timothy 2:15.<sup>11</sup> Eve had children, the matriarchs of Israel had children, and Mary the virgin gave birth to Jesus the Messiah. What Paul says about women and childbirth in 1 Timothy 2:15, younger widows in 5:14, and older and younger women in Titus 2:3–5 means that the fact that the singular seed of the woman, Messiah Jesus, has come does not absolve women of the responsibility to go on having children. Rather, like Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tim 1:5), mothers should pass the faith on to the children they bear (cf. 3:14–15).

The Bible's story does not focus on motherhood, but motherhood makes the Bible's story possible: that male child who escaped the dragon as his mother was giving birth to him in Revelation 12 returns to claim his bride in Revelation 19. There is a kind of anticipation of the marriage supper of the Lamb in the wedding scene in the Song of Songs, where we read,

Go out, O daughters of Zion,  
and look upon King Solomon,  
with the crown with which his mother  
crowned him,  
on the day of his wedding,  
on the day of the gladness of his heart  
(Song 3:11).

## THE BIBLE'S STATEMENTS ABOUT MOTHERHOOD

The Bible's statements about motherhood are made within the context of the broader storyline the biblical authors assume. This is a storyline that begins with

a man and woman naked without shame in a garden, shortly to find themselves banished from the presence of God, from uninhibited intimacy with one another, and from the fruitful land. No longer innocent, no longer naked,<sup>12</sup> Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden into thorns and thistles, away from the blessing of God into the pain of childbirth. But as we have seen, they went out with a promise of life.

The Bible's story provides the fund of imagery used in the Psalms to describe the good life. Psalm 128, for instance, speaks of the way that those who fear Yahweh and walk in his ways will experience the blessing of God that enables them to flourish in spite of the curse.

This song of ascents opens with a blessing on all who fear Yahweh, all who walk in his ways (Ps 128:1). It is as though the Psalmist is reflecting on the way that fearing Yahweh and walking in his ways brings a man blessing in spite of the curse on the land and the painful toil of Genesis 3:17–19. The Psalmist also speaks in terms reminiscent of the blessings of the Mosaic Covenant when he states that those who fear Yahweh will eat the fruit of their labor, be blessed, and have things go well for them (cf. Deut 28:1–14).

From there the Psalmist seems to reflect on the way that those who know God have marriages that are blessed in spite of the relational and physical difficulty promised in Genesis 3:16. The blessed man who delights in the Torah of Yahweh will himself be like a tree in Psalm 1, while his wife will be a fruitful vine and his children olive shoots around his table in Psalm 128:3. That reference to children as olive shoots may pick up the promise of life overcoming death from Genesis 3:15—not necessarily a reference to the singular seed of the woman but to the collective seed (cf. Gen 22:17–18).<sup>13</sup>

This experience—of life, fruitfulness, and the blessings of God transcending the curses of God—is promised to those who fear Yahweh in Psalm 128:4, then prayed for in 128:5–6. This brief Psalm functions as a snapshot of the good life: healthy labor with the world functioning as it was made to do, yielding fruit in season, fruit enjoyed by those who worked and kept the land, and a harmonious marriage with a flourishing wife, who is yielding the fruit of the marital covenant, bearing

children who are themselves promises of future fruitfulness. These are the blessings known by those who fear Yahweh enough to avoid transgressing his commands. Even in the cursed land east of Eden these blessings are available. Motherhood is a blessing enjoyed by those who know and fear Yahweh, those who experience his goodness. The land yielding its fruit is a kind of restoration to its created purpose, and the same holds for a wife functioning with her husband to be fruitful and multiply.

The Bible's storyline and the assumptions of the biblical authors also inform the statements on motherhood in the book of Proverbs. To read the Proverbs in isolation from one another is to miss the way that a holistic statement of the two ways, the way to life and the way to death, is built up as one moves through the whole of the Proverbs of Solomon. The book is to be read as a whole in its final, canonical form.<sup>14</sup> Doing so causes us to understand these statements in light of each other, and the individual pictures and proverbs complement each other, interpret one another, and result in a thick picture of how to avoid misery and enjoy the good life.

We could almost say that the book of Proverbs is showing the path of life that leads one back into the garden of Eden, and this book teaches that there are no shortcuts into that land where people enjoy the blessing of God. There is a way to attain all the pleasures people seek as they do wicked things, but those who do wicked things will not enjoy the pleasures they seek in transgression.

Fathers and mothers are to obey Deuteronomy 6 and teach their children (Prov 1:8).<sup>15</sup> A good mother is almost like lady Wisdom, whose invitation is heard in the street (1:20; 8:1); she is the wise woman who builds her house (14:1). Madame folly, by contrast, is a seductress (7:10; 9:13), who tears down her house with her own hands (14:1).

Wise children are a joy to their fathers; fools are grief to their mothers (Prov 10:1; 17:25). Fools despise their mothers (15:20); those who chase their mothers away cause shame and reproach (19:26): they are destructive (28:24), and darkness awaits them (20:20). The path of wickedness is open before undisciplined children, the danger of having no reason to honor father and mother

(30:11). Ravens will peck out their eyes (30:17) as they perish under God's curse.

Parents who want to deliver their children from folly are charged to love them enough to discipline them with the rod (13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13–14). Undisciplined children will shame their mothers (29:15). Disciplined children will delight their parents (29:17; cf. 22:23–25). Good kings have good mothers (31:1).

He who receives the gift of a prudent wife receives favor from Yahweh (Prov 18:22; 19:14), but a quarreling woman is a continual dripping to her husband (19:13), better to live on a corner of the roof, or in a desert, than with her (21:9, 19; 25:24). The wind is easier to restrain than her tongue (27:15–16).

A good wife is priceless (Prov 31:10). Her husband is not anxious about her, and her goodness helps him prosper (31:11). She brings him good not evil (31:12). She is hardworking (31:13), entrepreneurial (31:14), diligent (31:15), wise (31:16), capable (31:17), skilled (31:18–19), generous (31:20), and for all these reasons she can be confident (31:21). She tends her own bed and is properly adorned (31:22). Her husband suffers no shame from her (31:23). She blesses others, too (31:24). She has dignity, strength, and joy though adversity lurks (31:25). She is wise and teaches (31:26), wasting no time (31:27). Excellent and praiseworthy is she, blessed of children, praised of husband, fearing Yahweh and reaping her reward (31:10, 28–31).

The Old Testament's teaching informs what the authors of the New Testament say about wives and mothers. Peter urges believing wives who have unbelieving husbands not to be a continual dripping to them (1 Pet 3:1) but to live out a beautiful character (3:2–4), following the example of godly Old Testament wives, chiefly Sarah (3:5–6).

Paul's teaching on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 entails children: husbands and wives who do not deprive one another (7:1–5) will become fathers and mothers. Men and women are equal before God, one in Christ by faith in him (Gal 3:28), but this does not nullify the roles God created men and women to exercise (Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18–19).<sup>16</sup> Paul's discussion of marriage is naturally followed by a discussion of children, and mothers are to join fathers in raising children in the fear

and admonition of the Lord so their children will honor their parents and live the good life described in Psalms and Proverbs (Eph 6:1–4; Col 3:20–21).

The biblical authors everywhere assumes that marriage, a comprehensive interpersonal union between one man and one woman that is to be exclusive, monogamous, permanent, and produce children, is the proper context for motherhood.<sup>17</sup> The biblical authors are also aware that not everyone marries, and that not everyone is able to have children. The Bible commends those who look after orphans and widows, and with God our Father having adopted us (e.g., Rom 8:15), adoption is always a possibility for dearly loved children who would imitate him (Eph 5:1).<sup>18</sup> The Bible's depictions of and instructions for widows (e.g., 1 Tim 5:3–16) and older women (Tit 2:3–6) are relevant here as well, as are the wider instructions for all who are part of the family of God. Single women may not be mothers of their own families, but they need not be alone. The family of God provides them a set of relationships in which they can pursue the matriarchal role, and the urgency of the gospel gives them something great for which to live (1 Cor 7:8, 26).

## CONCLUSION

Across the street from the house Bellatrix inhabited, the little cyclones had gone to bed, the adults had flung themselves into chairs, a still hush falling in the growing dark at end of day.<sup>19</sup> The adults sat in front of the fire, soft smiles, quiet exhaustion.

"You know, dear, we could have avoided all this."

Prudentia smiled at the facetious joy behind her husband's words. Neither wanted to avoid any part of love.

"When we found we were infertile," he continued, "I wondered for a time whether any of this would be ours."

"If you had avoided all this," said their eldest son, whom they had adopted first, "none of it would have been mine, either."

"Nor mine."

"Nor mine."

"And I'm glad you didn't stop at three," added the youngest, throwing in a broad grin.

Prudentia looked at her husband and quoted the first line of Proverbs 17:6, "Grandchildren are the

crown of the aged.”

As she paused their daughter looked to her mother and father, adding the rest of the line, “and the glory of children is their fathers.”

Prudentia’s husband, warmed more by the words than the fire, looked into the eyes of his wife and quoted snatches of Proverbs 11:17 and 12:4, “A gracious woman gets honor ... An excellent wife is the crown of her husband.”

As if on cue, the children not of her womb but of her heart and life joined their father in their mother’s praise, “Her children rise up and call her blessed” (Prov 31:28).

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See further James M. Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> For the importance of Gen 3:15, see James M. Hamilton, “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (2006): 30–54; and for the connection between Gen 3:14–19 and 12:1–3, see James M. Hamilton, “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 58 (2007): 253–73.

<sup>3</sup> This understanding of the words “your desire will be for your husband, but he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16) is based on the use of the same terms in Gen 4:7.

<sup>4</sup> For the validity of seeing a singular seed in Gen 3:15, see Jack Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 139–48.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 68.

<sup>6</sup> See further Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 75–89.

<sup>7</sup> Similarly T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: Exploring God’s Plan for Life on Earth* (Nottingham England: InterVarsity, 2008), 27.

<sup>8</sup> T. D. Alexander, *The Servant King: The Bible’s Portrait of the Messiah* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1998), 23.

<sup>9</sup> See my exposition of Revelation 12 in James M. Ham-

ilton, *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 245–56.

<sup>10</sup> For the messianic woes in the Old and New Testaments, see Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 492–94.

<sup>11</sup> On this passage, see esp. Thomas R. Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15: A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 85–120.

<sup>12</sup> For reflections on nakedness and clothing, see John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 36–38.

<sup>13</sup> See T. Desmond Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 363–67.

<sup>14</sup> For more on reading Proverbs within the context of the canon, see Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 290–301.

<sup>15</sup> See James M. Hamilton, “That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord,” *Journal of Family Ministry* 1 (2010): 10–17.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of gender roles, see James M. Hamilton, “What Women Can Do in Ministry: Full Participation Within Biblical Boundaries,” in *Women, Ministry and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 32–52.

<sup>17</sup> This definition of marriage is from Sherif Girgis, Robert George, and Ryan T. Anderson, “What Is Marriage?” *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 34 (2010): 245–87; and for a response to some objections, see Robert P. George, Sherif Girgis, and Ryan T. Anderson, “The Argument Against Gay Marriage: And Why It Doesn’t Fail « Public Discourse,” *The Witherspoon Institute*, December 17, 2010, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2010/12/2217>. The biblical authors are aware of polygamy, and they do not hide the fact that some of the Bible’s major characters had multiple wives (e.g., Abraham and David). The Bible also shows the problems that always accompany polygamy. Those marriages are never depicted as happy, and then Jesus states that the two are to become

one flesh, which excludes polygamy (Matt 19:5–6).

<sup>18</sup>See Russell D. Moore, *Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families and Churches* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009).

<sup>19</sup>This language reflects a description in a letter written by C. S. Lewis, to which Tony Reink drew attention in a post on his blog: “C. S. Lewis on ‘Little Cyclones’ (Young Boys),” *Miscellanies.*, January 30, 2012, <https://spurgeon.wordpress.com/2012/01/30/c-s-lewis-on-little-cyclones-young-boys/>.