



## *a study on God, marriage, and family*

### WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION

#### **I. Marriage and family by the numbers:**

- Four out of five adults have been married at least once (78%)<sup>i</sup>
- 84% of “born again” Christians get married.
- Among married adults, 33% have experienced at least one divorce.
- The divorce rate among “born again” Christians is virtually identical to that of non-Christians (32% vs. 33%, respectively).
- A shocking ½ of 1% of persons aged 18-23 (in 2008) have a biblical worldview.<sup>ii</sup>
- The most significant factor in a child becoming a devoted Christian is whether or not the parent takes God’s words on life and family at face value, and applies those words faithfully and consistently.<sup>iii</sup>

#### **II. The Current Cultural Crisis**

- “For the first time in its history, Western civilization is confronted with the need to *define* the meaning of the terms “marriage” and “family.” (pg. 25)
- “The Judeo-Christian view of marriage and the family...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.” (pg. 25)
- In other words, America, on the whole, is no longer marked by biblical values and assumptions, but has rather embraced a more secular worldview.
- Biblical views on marriage and family are, not surprisingly, under attack in our civilization.

#### **III. The Underlying Spiritual Crisis**

- “The current cultural crisis, however, is merely symptomatic of a deep-seated spiritual crisis.” (pg. 25)
- Ephesians 6:12 – “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
- The solution to this current cultural crisis regarding marriage and family is therefore spiritual in nature.
  - ❖ *While many helpful correctives can and do stem from politics, sociology, psychology, academia, etc., only God’s Word and His Gospel offer a complete and lasting solution.*
- We must rebuild the biblical foundation of marriage and the family.

#### IV. Confusion over Marriage and Family

- Our Judeo-Christian heritage has been supplanted by an ideology that elevates human freedom and self-determination as the supreme principles for human relationships.
- The unbiblical views of marriage and the family that have grown out of this ideology have resulted in the following list of adverse effects:
  - ❖ *Skyrocketing divorce rates*
  - ❖ *Sex outside of marriage (premarital and extramarital)*
  - ❖ *Homosexuality*
  - ❖ *Gender-role confusion (viz., a loss of masculinity and femininity)*

#### V. The Church's Response

- "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." (pg. 27)
- Although there are specialized ministries, parachurch organizations, marriage seminars and retreats, books, magazines, videos, and Bible studies on marriage, there is still shockingly little difference between the world and the Church.
- Most of these materials do not seriously engage the Bible as a whole.
- The Church has primarily offered superficial remedies (which may be good things!) such as improving communication skills, enriching one's sex life, etc.
- "The result is that many Christian self-help books owe more to secular culture than a thorough-going Christian worldview." (pg. 29)

#### VI. The Goal(s) of this class

- Recover the biblical foundation of human relationships.
- Develop a biblical view of marriage
- Develop a biblical view of the family
- Adopt a biblical strategy for long-term success in marriage and family
- Increase our awareness of and need for the Bible as the standard for Christian living.

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<sup>i</sup> Barna Group, *New Marriage and Divorce Statistics Released*, March 31, 2008 (<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/15-familykids/42-new-marriage-and-divorce-statistics-released>)

<sup>ii</sup> 2008 Barna Research Group worldview study, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/252-barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years> /// *Barna used the following criterion to define a biblical worldview: believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today.*

<sup>iii</sup> The Barna Group, *Research Shows Parenting Approach Determines Whether Children Become Devoted Christians*, April 9, 2007 (<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/15-familykids/106-research-shows-parenting-approach-determines-whether-children-become-devoted-christians>)