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Exposing Modern Deceptions, Counterfeit Christianity, and the Church's Captivity to the Spirit of the Age

PART II

RECONSTRUCTING GOD, THE GOSPEL, AND HUMANITY

CHAPTER 10

The Assault on Created Order: Sex, Marriage, Family, Childhood, Life, and Death

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Abstract

This chapter examines the widening assault on created order that follows when sexual autonomy is extended into marriage, parenthood, childhood, reproduction, disability, ageing, and death. Building upon the preceding chapters' analysis of autonomous authority, expressive individualism, progressive hermeneutics, and the sexual revolution, it argues that the modern crisis is not produced by one institution or coordinated programme. It emerges through a convergence of weakened covenant, market individualism, technological power, therapeutic reasoning, legal change, family failure, and the denial that embodied limits possess moral meaning. Through sustained exposition of [Genesis 1:26-28](#), [Genesis 2:18-25](#), [Malachi 2:13-16](#), [Psalm 127:1-5](#), [Psalm 139:13-18](#), [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#), [Matthew 19:3-12](#), [Ephesians 5:21-33](#), [Ephesians 6:1-4](#), and [1 Timothy 5:3-8](#), the chapter presents male and female as equal image-bearers, marriage as a one-flesh covenant, parental authority as accountable stewardship, children as gifts rather than products, and human life as sacred from conception to natural death. It engages the strongest arguments concerning flexible marriage, feminist critiques of family injustice, child autonomy, reproductive liberty, in vitro fertilisation, donor conception, surrogacy, abortion, disability selection, euthanasia, and assisted suicide. Current demographic, legal, medical, and bioethical evidence is considered with careful distinctions between fact, inference, and theological judgment, including African realities of extended-family strength, migration, child marriage, domestic violence, infertility stigma, and donor-conditioned policy pressure. The chapter rebukes progressive revision and conservative hypocrisy alike, especially male tyranny, abandonment, abuse, and neglect of mothers, children, disabled persons, widows, and the elderly. It concludes with a constructive vision of the church as an intergenerational household of truth, protection, repentance, mercy, and resurrection hope, calling believers to covenant faithfulness and readiness for Christ's return.

Keywords: created order; biblical marriage; family and childhood; reproductive ethics; sanctity of life; euthanasia; rapture readiness

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When the House Is Sold Room by Room

A house can remain standing after its meaning has been removed. The walls are painted. The rooms are renamed. The furniture is rearranged. The family photographs are taken down because they carry an inheritance the new occupants do not wish to remember. The foundation is not demolished in one afternoon. It is sold room by room.

The bedroom is detached from covenant and made a theatre of private desire. Marriage is rewritten as an emotionally satisfying contract whose obligations survive only while the parties continue to experience fulfilment. Parenthood is separated from the bodily union through which children ordinarily come and is reimagined as an adult project to which technology, markets, donors, and contracts may supply the necessary components. Childhood is detached from parental stewardship and increasingly treated as a zone in which institutions, platforms, experts, advertisers, and political movements compete to form identity. Pregnancy is divided into wanted and unwanted life. Disability is measured against anticipated quality. Old age is calculated as dependency. Death is presented as treatment when suffering, loneliness, or perceived burden exceeds the tolerance of the autonomous self.

The house remains occupied, but the inheritance has changed.

Chapter 9 showed that the sexual revolution cannot remain confined to private desire. Once male and female embodiment, one-flesh marriage, and procreative meaning are detached from creation, other definitions must move. Marriage, parenthood, childhood, education, reproduction, disability, life, and death become open to reconstruction. The same court that asked whether desire may overrule the body must now decide whether adults may design a family without reference to the child's origins, whether an embryo may be ranked before implantation, whether a pregnancy has value only when welcomed, and whether a dependent life may be ended in the name of dignity.

This development does not require a single hidden committee. It is more historically complex and spiritually intimate than that. Different movements disagree with one another. Feminist reformers may oppose commercial surrogacy. Disability activists may defend abortion rights while resisting assisted suicide. Libertarians may support reproductive markets but distrust state control of parenting. Medical professionals may welcome fertility treatment while rejecting embryo enhancement. Governments may defend family stability in one policy and weaken it in another. The modern assault on created order is therefore not one conspiracy but a convergence. Autonomous desire, technological capacity, consumer markets, therapeutic language, legal individualism, institutional incentives, family failure, and the denial of divine design flow together even when their advocates do not share one intention.

The controlling claim of this chapter is that when covenant, embodiment, kinship, duty, generational responsibility, and divine design are displaced by autonomy, marriage becomes a revocable private arrangement, parenthood becomes an adult entitlement, children become products or projects, the body becomes manipulable material, and vulnerable human life becomes negotiable according to convenience, wantedness, health, age, cost, capacity, or productivity. The biblical alternative is not oppressive traditionalism. It is created order redeemed in Christ, where authority serves, strength protects, marriage keeps covenant, parents nurture, children are received as gifts, the weak are honoured, suffering is surrounded by love, and every human life possesses dignity because it belongs to God.

This chapter must also begin with confession. Traditional societies were not morally pure. Families have concealed forced marriage, child marriage, polygamy, concubinage, marital rape, domestic violence, son preference, property theft from widows, female genital mutilation, child labour, neglect of disabled persons, and the silencing of victims. Churches have sometimes defended the institution of marriage more vigorously than the people being crushed inside it. Men have quoted headship while refusing sacrifice, provision, fidelity, tenderness, and accountability. Parents have demanded honour while humiliating children. Pro-life rhetoric has sometimes ended at birth. Elderly believers have been celebrated in sermons and abandoned in practice.

Biblical recovery is therefore not nostalgia. The Word of God does not ask the church to return to every inherited custom. It summons modern autonomy and traditional injustice before the same Judge. Scripture refuses the progressive scissors that cut away created limits, and it refuses the conservative curtain that hides domestic corruption. The truth must enter every room.

Created Order Is Gift Before It Is Limit

Created order means the morally meaningful structures, distinctions, relationships, and purposes established by God in creation and interpreted by His revelation. It does not mean that every existing arrangement is good merely because it is old. Nor does it mean that every cultural expectation attached to men, women, marriage, work, childhood, or ageing is permanently binding. Clothing, household economies, inheritance customs, courtship practices, educational patterns, and divisions of ordinary labour vary across history. Scripture itself records cultural arrangements that it regulates without presenting them all as the unfallen ideal.

Created order refers more fundamentally to realities humanity receives rather than invents. God is Creator and humanity is creature. Human beings are embodied, male and female. Marriage joins one man and one woman in a public, exclusive, one-flesh covenant. Children ordinarily arise from that union and possess claims upon the adults whose actions generated them. Parents receive authority for nurture and protection, not ownership. Generations owe duties to one another. Human life bears God's image and cannot be valued by utility, independence, intelligence, social approval, or economic contribution. Death is an enemy, not a therapeutic achievement, even when medicine may rightly allow a dying person to complete the natural course of mortal life.

[Genesis 1:26-28](#) establishes the foundation. Humanity is created in God's image and likeness, male and female, blessed, and commissioned to be fruitful and exercise responsible dominion. Equal dignity is not inferred from social usefulness or granted by the state. It precedes achievement because it rests in divine creation. The newborn child, the person with profound cognitive disability, the woman carrying an unplanned pregnancy, the man weakened by disease, and the elderly person who no longer remembers a name do not descend the ladder of humanity as capacities diminish. There is no ladder. The image of God is not a performance threshold.

Male and female are named within this common dignity. The distinction does not divide humanity into a superior image and an inferior image. Both bear the image. Neither sex can claim fuller humanity. At the same time, equality does not make embodiment meaningless. Scripture does not say that humanity is created as interchangeable persons whose sex is incidental. The distinction belongs within the Creator's blessing, fruitfulness, relational life, and commission.

[Genesis 2:18-25](#) brings the pattern into the intimacy of marriage. The man is alone, and God declares the condition not good. The woman is neither an afterthought nor a servant manufactured for exploitation. She is the corresponding strength, alike in humanity and distinct in sex, able to stand before the man as one who answers him and whom he must answer. Adam's recognition, "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," is joy before possession. The narrative then interprets the union: a man leaves father and mother, bonds with his wife, and the two become one flesh.

One flesh contains bodily, covenantal, familial, and social meaning. It is not merely a metaphor for emotional closeness. The sexual union is ordered to express and enact a comprehensive joining whose natural structure is capable of generating a third person. Not every marriage will conceive. Infertility does not invalidate marriage, and age does not dissolve it. Yet the type of union is procreative even when a particular union is not fertile. Husband and wife do not produce children as manufacturers. They participate in a created good in which love may overflow into life.

This order is gift before it is limit. The modern ear often hears prohibition first: one man, one woman, fidelity, responsibility, restraint. Scripture begins with blessing, recognition, nakedness without shame, fruitfulness, and communion. The boundary protects a good that sin will later fracture. A riverbank does not hate water. It gives water a course in which life can grow.

The fall disorders every dimension. Desire becomes possessive. Authority becomes domination. Shame enters the body. Blame enters marriage. Pain accompanies fruitfulness. Work becomes toil.

Death enters human experience. Created order remains, but it is now resisted from within. Men use strength to rule rather than serve. Women and men manipulate, conceal, compete, seduce, abandon, and accuse. Families can become places of love or laboratories of inherited sin.

Redemption therefore does not merely preserve the family as a social institution. Christ judges, forgives, and transforms people within it. He calls husbands to cruciform love, wives to faithful honour, parents to patient formation, children to obedience in the Lord, the strong to care for the weak, and the church to become a household where biological status neither grants salvation nor denies belonging. Created order is not saved by sentiment. It is taken beneath the cross.

From Covenant to Contract, and from Contract to Customisation

Marriage has always existed within changing economic, legal, and cultural conditions. Premodern households combined functions now distributed among employers, schools, insurers, hospitals, states, and markets. Industrialisation separated paid work from the household. Urbanisation and migration weakened kin oversight. Modern education expanded individual opportunity. Women's legal and economic reforms corrected grave injustices, including exclusion from property, education, public participation, and protection against violence. These gains should not be condemned as departures from Scripture merely because they altered older family arrangements.

Yet legitimate reform occurred alongside a deeper shift in the meaning of the self. Marriage moved in many societies from a public institution shaped by kinship, duty, property, religion, and procreation toward companionate marriage centred on affection, and then toward individualised marriage centred on personal development and emotional satisfaction. Cherlin (2004) describes this as deinstitutionalisation, a weakening of the norms that specify how spouses are expected to behave even as marriage retains symbolic prestige. The person increasingly enters marriage asking not only, "Whom must I love faithfully?" but, "Will this relationship continue to validate the person I wish to become?"

The question is understandable. Marriages without affection can become cold systems of duty. Women have been trapped in unions where economic dependence protected cruelty. Families have demanded public appearance while refusing private repentance. A biblical covenant is not an excuse for relational neglect. Love, friendship, tenderness, sexual fidelity, shared counsel, and mutual delight belong to good marriage.

The distortion begins when fulfilment becomes the condition of obligation. A contract exchanges benefits under agreed terms and may provide lawful remedies when terms are breached. Marriage includes legal dimensions, but covenant goes further. It binds the future self. The vow is made precisely because desire, health, income, beauty, emotional intensity, and circumstance will change. Covenant says that the person beside me will not be reduced to the value he or she supplies today.

Contemporary critics raise serious objections. Okin (1989) argued that the family has often been treated as a private sphere exempt from justice, allowing unequal distributions of labour and vulnerability to persist. Brake (2012) contends that the state should minimise marriage and support diverse adult care networks rather than privilege a particular romantic form. These critiques expose real failures. Marriage law and church practice have too often protected male entitlement, rendered women's unpaid labour invisible, or made unmarried persons appear socially defective.

The biblical answer is not to defend injustice as hierarchy. It is to ask whether the abuse of covenant requires covenant's abolition or its truthful recovery. A corrupt court does not disprove justice. A violent father does not make fatherhood meaningless. A husband who demands service while withholding sacrifice is not an argument against [Ephesians 5](#). He is evidence that [Ephesians 5](#) has not been obeyed.

Sangwa and Mutabazi's (2025a) seven-country African analysis describes a rights-cohesion paradox. Legal equality is necessary for justice, but reform may produce short-term increases in

registered marital dissolution where existing instability becomes legally actionable, especially when responsibilities and communal supports are not strengthened alongside rights. Their corporate-cooperative typology is helpful if used cautiously. A corporate-like union concentrates power through resources. A cooperative-like union may treat strict symmetry as the whole meaning of justice. Both can miss covenant, where equal dignity coexists with differentiated responsibility, shared goods, sacrificial love, and accountability before God.

Global mobility and dual-career households intensify these pressures. Sangwa and Mutabazi (2025b) show how migration, study, mission, and work-family boundary strain can weaken attachment and shared routines while also enlarging opportunity. Economic survival may require separation, especially in African contexts where employment is geographically concentrated. The problem is not mobility itself. It is the ease with which vocation becomes a rival covenant, consuming the time, presence, and attention owed to spouse, children, ageing parents, and church.

Career idolatry wears respectable clothing. A father may provide school fees while remaining emotionally absent. A mother may be praised for professional excellence while carrying an impossible double burden because the household treats her paid work as optional and her unpaid work as automatic. A couple may accumulate property while losing the common life for which the property was intended. The modern household can become a small corporation whose members share expenses and calendars but no longer share worship, vulnerability, discipline, or hope.

Created order does not require one economic arrangement for every family. Scripture praises industrious women, commands men to provide, honours household enterprise, recognises seasons of singleness, and does not forbid professional vocation. The moral question is not whether a wife earns income or a husband cooks. The question is whether gifts, work, and authority are ordered toward faithful love, whether burdens are borne justly, whether children receive presence as well as provision, and whether ambition has become a god.

Marriage as Covenant, Not a Subscription

[Malachi 2:13-16](#) addresses men who cover the altar with tears while acting treacherously against the wives of their youth. The Lord is not impressed by religious emotion detached from marital faithfulness. He identifies Himself as witness between husband and wife and names the woman “your marriage partner and your wife by covenant.” Worship and domestic conduct cannot be separated. A man may sing loudly, preach accurately, give generously, and still find his offerings resisted because he has dealt faithlessly at home.

The passage is often summarised by the statement that God hates divorce. The surrounding argument gives that warning moral texture. God hates the treachery and violence by which covenant is torn. The text must never be used to tell a battered woman that God is more concerned about the legal appearance of marriage than the violence concealed beneath its garment. The Lord who condemns covenant-breaking also sees the person against whom covenant has been broken. Divorce can itself be a grave evil, and it can also be the legal recognition of an evil already committed through adultery, abandonment, or destructive unrepentance.

Jesus returns to creation when questioned about divorce in [Matthew 19:3-12](#). The Pharisees ask what may justify putting away a wife. Jesus asks what the Creator intended “from the beginning.” He joins [Genesis 1](#) and 2: male and female, leaving, cleaving, one flesh, and divine joining. Moses regulated divorce because of hardness of heart, not because divorce expressed the original good. Jesus therefore refuses a legalism that searches for the widest permissible exit while ignoring the covenant being destroyed.

The Christian doctrine of marriage contains several inseparable claims. Marriage is public rather than merely private because it creates obligations recognised by families, church, and society. It is exclusive because one-flesh fidelity cannot be divided among competing spouses or secret partners. It is permanent in intention because covenant binds persons through change. It is sexually embodied because husband and wife unite as male and female. It is ordered toward mutual help, holiness,

hospitality, and potential fruitfulness. It is a sign beyond itself because [Ephesians 5:21-33](#) relates the union to Christ and the church.

[Ephesians 5](#) has been among the most misused household texts. Paul begins the section within a community filled by the Spirit, giving thanks, speaking truth, walking in wisdom, and submitting to one another in the fear of Christ. He then addresses wives and husbands distinctly. The wife is called to recognise her husband's headship. The husband is not authorised to demand comfort, silence, or control. He is commanded to love as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. The model of male headship is not Caesar on a throne. It is Christ at the cross.

Sacrificial headship means responsibility before privilege. It refuses sexual entitlement. It does not purchase obedience through income. It does not isolate the wife from family, friends, church, education, employment, or lawful assistance. It does not turn every preference of the husband into divine command. It does not protect male anger from examination. A man who quotes “wives, submit” while ignoring “husbands, love” has cut the passage in half and placed himself where Christ alone belongs.

Likewise, submission is not female inferiority, passive acceptance of evil, suspension of conscience, or participation in sin. A wife remains a disciple of Christ, a bearer of God's image, a moral agent, and a member of the church. She may disagree, appeal, seek counsel, resist unlawful demands, report crime, separate for safety, and call the husband to repentance. The apostles refused commands that contradicted God. Marriage does not create a private kingdom in which the husband becomes scripture.

The modern alternative often defines marriage by adult consent, equality, affection, and mutual care. These goods are important. Consent excludes coercion. Equality protects dignity. Affection enriches companionship. Care sustains vulnerability. Yet none is sufficient by itself. Consent can authorise an arrangement without making it righteous. Adults may consent to betrayal, exploitation, or contracts that commodify another body. Equality does not tell us which relationships constitute marriage. Affection fluctuates. Care exists in friendships, siblings, congregations, and professional relationships. Marriage is a particular covenant, not a general word for every caring bond.

A subscription remains active while payment continues and the service satisfies. Covenant does not turn a spouse into a service provider. The question within marriage is not merely, “Am I receiving what I ordered?” but, “How shall I remain faithful to the person entrusted to me before God?” This does not sanctify abuse or require victims to make danger available to an aggressor. It means that ordinary disappointment, ageing, illness, infertility, economic decline, and emotional seasons do not automatically cancel the vow.

Divorce, Abandonment, and the Children Who Carry the Shards

Christian teaching should resist two opposite errors. One treats divorce as an ordinary instrument of self-renewal. The other treats the preservation of a marriage certificate as the highest good, even when one spouse is living in terror. Scripture presents divorce as a sorrow bound to human hardness, permits it in defined circumstances, calls the church toward reconciliation where repentance makes reconciliation morally possible, and requires protection of the innocent.

Prof. Sangwa's earlier teaching consistently presents marriage as a lifetime covenant and identifies sexual immorality and abandonment by an unbelieving spouse as explicit New Testament grounds for divorce, while urging forgiveness and reconciliation rather than mechanical dissolution (Sangwa, 2023, 2024a). This chapter retains that seriousness. It also insists that pastoral application must distinguish reconciliation from unsafe proximity. A violent spouse may be required to leave the home, face civil investigation, submit to discipline, make restitution, and demonstrate sustained repentance. Forgiveness is a Christian duty; immediate restoration of trust is not. Trust concerns tested character, not only spoken regret.

Divorce data are difficult to compare across countries. Administrative records count legal events, not every separation. Some societies have high informal union and dissolution. Others contain strong stigma that suppresses registration. A rise in divorce can indicate growing instability, greater legal access for abused spouses, better registration, or several causes at once. Rwanda's 2025 vital statistics, for example, record 4,479 divorce cases and 2,629 court grants, but these figures should not be mistaken for a national divorce rate without an appropriate denominator and longitudinal comparison (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2026).

The effects on children also resist slogans. Family conflict before separation may be more damaging than separation itself. In Senegal, Crespin-Boucaud and Hotte (2021) found that parental divorce did not produce uniformly negative educational effects and that some younger children experienced improved outcomes, plausibly where separation reduced household conflict or altered resources. This finding does not make divorce good. It warns against pretending that a child always benefits from preserving the same address while violence, terror, or humiliation continue inside it.

Nevertheless, covenantal breakdown commonly redistributes pain toward those who did not choose it. Children may lose daily access to a parent, move between homes, absorb adult hostility, experience economic decline, or become messengers in a war. The innocent child is often asked to carry the shards while adults describe the event as personal fulfilment. Christian parents who separate must therefore refuse to recruit children into accusation, manipulate access, conceal financial responsibilities, or use a new relationship to erase an old duty.

This responsibility extends to children conceived outside marriage. Conversion does not dissolve fatherhood. Sangwa (2024b) rightly argues that repentance from adultery requires ending the sinful relationship while continuing active financial, emotional, and paternal responsibility toward the children. Grace does not make previous dependants disappear. A man who praises new life in Christ while abandoning the child created through his old life has misunderstood repentance. Restitution does not recreate adultery. It honours the child who bears no guilt for the circumstances of conception.

Father absence has many causes: death, war, labour migration, incarceration, marital separation, social exclusion, and deliberate abandonment. Research on paternal involvement is heterogeneous. A 2024 systematic review found too few comparable studies to support simplistic claims about direct mental-health effects, although patterns were often moderated by family context and the quality of involvement (Puglisi et al., 2024). Earlier longitudinal evidence generally associated constructive paternal engagement with positive developmental outcomes, but causal pathways remain complex (Sarkadi et al., 2008). The moral point does not depend on exaggeration. Children need faithful adults, and fathers possess responsibilities that cannot be replaced by money alone.

To the father who has left: your child is not a failed relationship. Your child is a neighbour entrusted to you. Do not force a mother to beg for what justice requires. Do not arrive with gifts for photographs and disappear from ordinary discipline, school meetings, illness, prayer, and presence. Do not blame unemployment for every absence while finding money for pleasure, betting, alcohol, travel, or another household. Poverty can limit provision. It does not excuse indifference.

To the mother carrying an unjust burden: the church must not romanticise your exhaustion. It should supply practical help, child care, legal guidance, material support, and spiritual companionship. Single motherhood is not the biblical ideal for family formation, but many single mothers live with extraordinary faithfulness after abandonment, bereavement, violence, or another person's sin. They should not be treated as warnings before they are treated as sisters.

To the church that preaches family values: examine the men. Do not reserve discipline for pregnant young women while the responsible men remain invisible. Do not celebrate male leadership in public while tolerating pornography, secret children, financial neglect, adultery, aggression, or emotional abandonment in private. A congregation that places flowers around marriage but leaves mothers to carry male sin alone has decorated the tomb.

Motherhood, Fatherhood, and the Refusal of Interchangeability

Motherhood and fatherhood share many ordinary tasks. Both parents can feed, teach, comfort, discipline, pray, work, listen, and protect. Cultural stereotypes should not be baptised as divine law. A boy does not become less male because he is gentle. A girl does not become less female because she is intellectually formidable, physically courageous, or professionally gifted. Scripture honours women as prophets, judges, entrepreneurs, patrons, disciples, teachers of younger women, mothers, widows, and workers. It condemns the denial of justice to women.

Yet the ability to share tasks does not make motherhood and fatherhood identical. A mother bears a unique bodily relation to the child through pregnancy, birth, and often nursing. A father possesses a different but equally real relation, ordinarily mediated through his union with the mother and expressed through recognition, protection, provision, presence, and the public acceptance of responsibility. These are not merely costumes assigned by society. They arise from sexed embodiment and generation.

Modern arguments often respond that caring adults can perform parental functions regardless of sex. At one level this is true and merciful. Grandparents, adoptive parents, relatives, guardians, and single parents often perform tasks left vacant by death, abandonment, infertility, war, or abuse. Scripture honours such care. Adoption can become a beautiful act of receiving a child who needs a family. The church itself forms relationships beyond blood.

But repair should not redefine the original wound as irrelevant. The fact that a skilled surgeon can repair an injured limb does not prove that injury and intactness are the same. Social parenthood can provide genuine love without making biological origins meaningless. Children may love adoptive parents deeply and still ask about birth parents. Donor-conceived persons may flourish and still experience grief, curiosity, or anger concerning concealed ancestry. The adult desire to form a family must not silence the child's interest in identity, kinship, medical history, and origins.

Honouring motherhood must not reduce women to reproduction. Some women are single. Some marriages are infertile. Some women suffer miscarriage or cannot safely bear children. Some are called to demanding scholarship, enterprise, medicine, public service, or ministry within biblical order. Their dignity does not rise and fall with fertility. The church should reject both the market that treats motherhood as an obstacle to achievement and the tradition that treats a woman's gifts as a threat to male insecurity.

Honouring fatherhood must not reduce men to income. Provision matters. First Timothy 5:8 treats refusal to provide for one's household as a denial of the faith. Yet a child needs more than payments. Fathers teach through presence, repentance, affection, boundaries, example, and the treatment of the child's mother. A man who funds a home but fills it with fear has not provided safety. A man who earns little but labours honestly, loves faithfully, prays with his children, and bears responsibility may be richer in fatherhood than the absentee executive.

The complementary pattern is therefore not male command and female exhaustion. It is differentiated self-giving within one household. It is a husband who spends strength for the good of wife and children, and a wife whose wisdom and labour are honoured rather than assumed. It is shared counsel under Scripture. It is no competition over whose career proves greater worth. It is no permission for passivity. Every member asks what love requires in this season.

Children Are Gifts, Not Projects or Possessions

[Psalm 127:1-5](#) places children within divine gift: unless the Lord builds the house, builders labour in vain; children are a heritage from the Lord. The psalm is not a romantic guarantee that every household will be easy. It locates generation and security beneath God's sovereignty. Children are received, not manufactured into meaning by adult will.

A gift cannot be reduced to property. Parents do not own children's bodies, consciences, labour, futures, or public image. They receive stewardship for a person whose ultimate allegiance belongs to God. The child is not a parental achievement, extension of ego, retirement plan, tribal asset, content source, or evidence of spiritual favour.

This principle judges traditional and modern abuses. In some settings, children are pressed into early marriage, hazardous work, commercial begging, domestic servitude, or family prestige. Girls may be denied education because investment is reserved for sons. Boys may be taught that emotion is weakness and violence is masculinity. Widows and orphans may lose property to relatives who invoke custom. The authority of parents and kin is real, but it is not absolute.

[Ephesians 6:1-4](#) speaks to both children and fathers. Children obey “in the Lord,” an expression that places obedience within Christ's authority. The command to honour father and mother preserves intergenerational order. Yet fathers are warned not to provoke children to anger but to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Authority is accountable to the child's good. Discipline is formation, not humiliation.

Parental authority includes naming boundaries, teaching truth, correcting wrongdoing, selecting education, supervising media, and protecting the child from exploitation. It also includes listening. Parents may misunderstand a child's suffering, disability, temperament, or questions. A child is not disloyal merely because he reports abuse. A daughter is not rebellious merely because she resists forced marriage. A son is not dishonouring merely because he exposes a father's crime. Obedience to parents never requires participation in sin or silence before serious harm.

The state also has a legitimate but limited protective role. Where parents assault, sexually abuse, starve, traffic, abandon, or endanger children, lawful authorities should intervene. Churches must report where law requires and should not hide crimes in the name of family privacy. The doctrine of parental rights cannot become a sanctuary for predators.

At the same time, protection can be enlarged into displacement. Institutions may treat parents as obstacles whenever parents question a professional or ideological framework. Education is never neutral. Every curriculum presents an account of the person, the body, authority, justice, freedom, and the good. The issue is not whether children will be formed, but by whom, toward what end, and with what accountability.

[Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#) gives parents the primary vocation of covenant formation. God's words are to be held in the heart, repeated to children, and woven through ordinary life: sitting, walking, lying down, rising. Formation is not one weekly lesson. It is a household atmosphere. Parents cannot outsource discipleship to church programmes while home worship is absent, speech is cruel, money is worshipped, and screens teach for hours each day.

Prof. Sangwa's earlier work warns that early education and contemporary media can challenge Christian family formation by placing powerful moral narratives before children before parents have equipped them to discern (Sangwa, 2024c). The concern should be stated carefully. Not every school is an enemy, and teachers often protect neglected children, cultivate literacy, and serve sacrificially. The danger is institutional authority without parental transparency, especially where contested claims about sex, identity, autonomy, or religion are presented as settled care rather than moral anthropology.

Digital formation is even less visible. A device may educate, connect, entertain, and support disabled learners. It may also introduce pornography, predators, gambling, self-harm content, commercial manipulation, and communities that reward secrecy. UNICEF's Disrupting Harm research found that in several participating countries a substantial minority of internet-using adolescents reported online sexual exploitation or abuse within a year, with country estimates reaching roughly one in five in some settings (UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti et al., 2022). These figures vary by method and country, but the scale is sufficient to end parental innocence.

The child with a smartphone holds a public square, marketplace, bedroom door, stranger network, and private library in one hand. Parental love must therefore become technically competent. It should establish age-appropriate limits, shared access, honest conversations, device-

free times, reporting pathways, and a household culture in which a child can disclose disturbing contact without being blamed.

Parents must also examine themselves. A mother who posts a child's humiliation for engagement, or a father who turns every achievement into personal branding, may be exploiting the child while speaking the language of pride. The right to share does not cancel the child's future dignity. Childhood should contain spaces unrecorded by the market.

When Medicine Enters the Nursery Before Conception

Infertility is not an abstraction. It can bring monthly grief, shame, marital tension, invasive procedures, financial loss, and the ache of watching others receive what one has prayed for. In some African communities infertility is treated as a woman's fault even when male factors are present. Women may be mocked, threatened with divorce, or pressured toward unbiblical remedies. Men may conceal diagnosis to preserve status. Churches may make reckless promises that sufficient faith will certainly produce a child.

The barren women of Scripture are not presented as spiritually defective. Their stories carry sorrow, prayer, providence, and, in particular cases, miraculous birth within redemptive history. They do not establish that every faithful couple will conceive. The church must refuse the cruelty of turning fertility into proof of divine favour.

Reproductive medicine can serve genuine healing. Diagnosis and treatment of infection, hormonal disorder, obstruction, endometriosis, or other pathology may restore a bodily function. Ethical judgment becomes more difficult when treatment moves from assisting marital intercourse toward replacing it, creating embryos outside the body, dividing genetic, gestational, and social parenthood, and selecting which embryonic lives may be transferred, frozen, studied, or discarded.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority reported that in the United Kingdom more than 100,000 fertility treatment and preservation cycles occurred in 2024, with approximately 53,000 IVF patients and about 21,400 IVF births. Around one in five IVF births used donated eggs, sperm, or embryos, while egg and embryo freezing formed a growing proportion of activity (Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, 2026). These are jurisdiction-specific and partly preliminary data, not global estimates. They nevertheless show that assisted reproduction has moved from exceptional intervention toward a significant industry and social institution.

In vitro fertilisation ordinarily involves ovarian stimulation, egg retrieval, fertilisation in a laboratory, embryo culture, and transfer of selected embryos. Clinical practice has increasingly favoured single-embryo transfer to reduce multiple pregnancy, but a central ethical issue remains: multiple embryos may be created, graded, tested, frozen, donated for research, allowed to perish, or deliberately discarded. The moral judgment depends on what the embryo is.

Human embryology describes fertilisation as the union of sperm and oocyte forming a zygote, a new diploid organism that begins a coordinated developmental trajectory (Alberts et al., 2002; Gilbert, 2000). Biology alone does not settle every philosophical question about personhood. It does establish that the embryo is not a maternal organ, an unfertilised gamete, or merely a possible human organism. It is a living human organism at an early stage. The infant is not more human than the fetus, and the fetus is not more human than the embryo. The differences concern development, size, location, dependency, and function, not species.

[Psalm 139:13-18](#) speaks poetically and theologically of God's knowledge and craftsmanship in the womb. The psalm does not provide an embryology manual. It declares that hidden development is not hidden from God. [Jeremiah 1:4-5](#) similarly concerns a particular prophetic calling, but its logic assumes divine knowledge and purpose before public capacity. [Luke 1:39-45](#) portrays the unborn John responding in Elizabeth's womb. These texts converge with the wider biblical refusal to ground dignity in visible function.

The strongest defence of IVF begins with compassion. Medicine should relieve infertility. Adults who long to nurture children should not be denied help merely because conception requires assistance. Preimplantation genetic testing may help couples avoid transmission of serious disease.

Embryo freezing may preserve fertility before cancer treatment. Donor gametes may allow pregnancy where a spouse cannot produce viable gametes. Supporters argue that early embryos lack consciousness, sensation, social relations, and developed individuality, so their moral status is not equivalent to that of born persons.

These arguments deserve serious engagement. The Christian objection should not imply that infertile couples are selfish or that every clinician is indifferent to life. It asks whether the desire for a child, however good, creates a right to methods that expose embryonic human beings to selection and disposal. Children are not owed to adults. They are persons whose good must govern the means by which they are brought into the world.

A distinction is therefore necessary between the desire to receive a child and entitlement to obtain one. Desire can kneel. Entitlement demands. Desire grieves limits. Entitlement converts every limit into a technical problem and every available body into a possible resource.

Donor Conception and Fragmented Parentage

Donor eggs and sperm divide parenthood into genetic, gestational, legal, and social components. A child may be conceived from the gametes of people never intended to be parents, carried by another woman, and raised by commissioning adults. Supporters emphasise that parenting is constituted by committed care rather than genetics alone. Adoption demonstrates that loving parenthood can exist without biological connection.

Adoption, however, responds to a child who exists and needs care. Donor conception intentionally creates a child under an arrangement designed to exclude or anonymise a genetic parent. The two practices should not be treated as morally identical. Adoption recognises a prior loss and seeks repair. Third-party reproduction may plan the separation as the means of fulfilment.

This does not condemn the child. No person conceived through donor technologies bears guilt or diminished dignity. The church must never use the circumstances of conception as a stigma. The moral examination concerns adult decisions and institutions, not the worth of the person created.

The child's interests include more than being wanted. They may include knowledge of ancestry, medical history, siblings, and the people from whom bodily identity came. Some jurisdictions now move toward identity-release donation because secrecy can harm trust. The deeper lesson is that adult privacy should not automatically overrule a child's origins.

Surrogacy and the Contracted Womb

Surrogacy adds a further division. A woman agrees to carry a pregnancy for intended parents, sometimes using her own egg but increasingly through gestational surrogacy. The strongest ethical defence stresses autonomy, informed consent, the desire to help others, and regulation. The American Society for Reproductive Medicine recommends independent legal counsel, informed consent, medical screening, and respect for the gestational carrier's autonomy (American Society for Reproductive Medicine Ethics Committee, 2023). These safeguards matter. A woman is not necessarily coerced merely because she receives compensation, and an altruistic arrangement is not automatically free from emotional pressure.

Yet contract does not remove the moral meaning of pregnancy. Gestation is not the rental of empty space. A woman undergoes bodily risk, hormonal change, relational attachment, medical surveillance, labour, and the deliberate surrender of the child she has carried. Commercial payment can intensify inequalities between commissioning adults with resources and women whose economic vulnerability makes pregnancy a livelihood.

International law remains fragmented. A United Nations Special Rapporteur warned that some surrogacy arrangements may amount to the sale of children and that cross-border arrangements can expose children to uncertain parentage and nationality (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). The ethical debate is not resolved by invoking either “choice” or “exploitation” in every case. The question is whether a human child and a woman's reproductive labour should become objects of enforceable exchange.

A contract can specify expenses, conduct, medical decisions, fetal reduction, abortion, diet, travel, communication, and transfer after birth. The more completely the contract protects commissioning intent, the more it may constrain the pregnant woman. The more completely it protects the woman, the less certain the commissioners can be that the purchased outcome will be delivered. The tension is not an administrative defect. It reveals that persons cannot be fitted cleanly into a product agreement.

Genetic Selection and the Child as Forecast

Preimplantation genetic testing can identify chromosomal abnormalities or particular monogenic disorders. Parents facing severe hereditary disease may seek to spare a child suffering. The moral concern is not indifference to disease. It is the method of choosing among embryonic siblings and the expanding logic by which anticipated traits become conditions of welcome.

Polygenic embryo screening attempts to estimate complex disease or trait probabilities using polygenic scores. Turley et al. (2021) identify substantial predictive limitations within sibling embryos, risks of unintended selection effects, inequality, population bias, and the devaluation of traits. A score is a probabilistic forecast, not destiny. Marketing can nevertheless turn uncertainty into parental obligation: responsible parents are told they should choose the embryo with the lower predicted burden or greater anticipated advantage.

Here the market begins writing a new beatitude: blessed are the optimised, for they were selected. Disability becomes not only a condition requiring care but an outcome someone is accused of failing to prevent. Parents who welcome a child with a known condition may be treated as irresponsible. The disabled person hears society's judgment in advance: lives like yours should have been filtered out.

Christian ethics distinguishes therapy from enhancement, but even therapy requires scrutiny. Treating a living patient is different from discarding one embryo to select another. Correcting disease in a person is different from choosing which person receives permission to continue. The first addresses a condition; the second may make the condition a criterion of existence.

The church should help couples ask questions before a clinic's momentum carries them forward. How many embryos will be created? What will happen to those not transferred? Will donors be used? Can fertilisation be limited? What testing is proposed, and what decisions follow? What are the medical risks to the woman? Does the procedure unite or fragment marital parenthood? Are we treating a child as gift or as an outcome ordered from a catalogue?

The church should also honour ethical restraint. A couple that declines a procedure may endure grief others cannot see. A marriage without children is not an unfinished marriage. Singleness is not failed adulthood. Adoption may be a faithful vocation, but infertile couples should not be commanded to adopt as though adoption were a consolation prize. The community of Christ must provide belonging broad enough that fertility is neither idol nor shame.

The Unborn Child and the Argument from Bodily Autonomy

Abortion stands at the centre of modern conflict because it brings two embodied lives into one moral field. The woman is not an abstraction. She may be frightened, poor, ill, abandoned, young, raped, coerced, or facing a devastating diagnosis. The unborn child is also not an abstraction. The child is small, hidden, dependent, and unable to speak, but dependency does not convert one human organism into another person's tissue.

The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 73 million induced abortions occur each year and that about 45 percent are unsafe, with burdens concentrated where health systems and legal access are limited (World Health Organization, 2025a). WHO frames access to abortion as health care and publishes evidence-based clinical guidance (World Health Organization, 2025b). The Center for Reproductive Rights documents a globally divergent legal landscape ranging from

prohibition to abortion on request (Center for Reproductive Rights, 2026). In Africa, Article 14(2)(c) of the Maputo Protocol calls upon states to authorise medical abortion in cases including sexual assault, rape, incest, and danger to the woman's health or life (African Union, 2003). These sources represent influential public-health and rights-based frameworks. Their authority does not settle the theological question, but their concerns must be answered rather than ignored.

The strongest pro-choice argument is not simply that the unborn child is worthless. It often begins with the woman's bodily authority. Even if the fetus possesses moral value, no person is ordinarily entitled to use another person's body without continuing consent. Judith Jarvis Thomson's (1971) famous defence argues that a right to life does not necessarily include the right to another's bodily support. Later defenders add equality, privacy, poverty, maternal health, unsafe abortion, rape, severe fetal anomaly, and the social cost of compelled pregnancy.

This case is morally serious because pregnancy is uniquely demanding. The woman does not merely lend property. Her body sustains another body. She faces medical risk, labour, economic consequences, stigma, and long-term responsibility. Any Christian argument that speaks of the child while treating the mother as a container has already violated the doctrine of the image of God.

Yet bodily autonomy is not absolute. Bodies exist within relationships and obligations. Parents may be required to feed, shelter, supervise, and protect children even when care is exhausting. A father cannot claim bodily autonomy to refuse all labour for a dependent child. We recognise special duties when a person's actions have created dependency, and we recognise duties toward vulnerable persons even when dependency was not chosen.

Pregnancy is also not analogous in every respect to an unrelated stranger attached without natural relation. The unborn child is the woman's offspring, located where human offspring ordinarily develop, and, except in rape, usually dependent as a foreseeable result of voluntary sexual conduct by both mother and father. The father's moral responsibility is profound even though pregnancy occurs in the woman's body. Male abandonment often converts a shared act into a woman's crisis.

The right-to-life argument must therefore be joined to a responsibility argument. The unborn child does not need to prove cognitive achievement to remain human. The mother does not cease to bear dignity because she is pregnant. The father does not become morally irrelevant because law cannot gestate him. The community cannot preach "choose life" and then disappear when rent, food, safety, health care, child care, and social shame arrive.

Wantedness Cannot Create Humanity

A wanted pregnancy is announced as a baby. An unwanted pregnancy is often described as tissue or a problem. The biological entity has not changed between the two descriptions. Wantedness changes relationship and intention, not species. If dignity depends upon being wanted, the abandoned infant, disabled adult, lonely elder, and neglected refugee all stand on unstable ground.

This is why prenatal selection raises a wider cultural question. Screening can prepare families and clinicians for treatment and care. It can also become a search for lives society prefers not to receive. Sex-selective abortion treats girls as mistakes. Disability-selective abortion communicates that some forms of dependence invalidate welcome. A compassionate society should reduce suffering. It should not confuse reducing suffering with reducing the number of sufferers by preventing their existence.

Disability advocates have long challenged the assumption that quality of life can be predicted from diagnosis alone. Social exclusion, inaccessible environments, poverty, and lack of support create suffering that is then attributed to the disabled body. The moral response should include treatment, accommodation, companionship, and resources, not a prenatal verdict that nonexistence is preferable.

Rape, Severe Diagnosis, and the Cases That Break Slogans

Pregnancy from rape is a profound violation. The woman did not consent to the act that created dependency. She may experience the pregnancy as a continuing invasion and public evidence of

violence. Christians must reject glib answers. She needs safety, trauma-informed care, legal protection, patient counsel, and a community willing to carry consequences. The rapist should bear full criminal and financial responsibility where law permits. Shame belongs to the offender, not the victim.

The child's humanity, however, is not altered by the father's crime. Punishing the child cannot reverse the assault. This conclusion is costly. It must be accompanied by costly solidarity. A church that asks a woman to preserve life must be prepared to help preserve hers.

Severe fetal diagnosis presents another agony. Some conditions involve brief life, intense suffering, or likely death before or soon after birth. Parents may feel trapped between love and fear. Perinatal palliative care, careful obstetric counsel, grief support, and permission to lament are essential. The biblical conviction that life is sacred does not require pretending medicine can cure every condition or that prolonging every biological process is obligatory. It does require that the child be treated as a patient and neighbour rather than a failed product.

Saving the Mother and the Difference of Intention

There are rare situations in which pregnancy gravely threatens the mother's life and treatment cannot preserve both lives. Christian moral reasoning has historically distinguished direct abortion, where the death of the unborn child is chosen as the means or end, from treatment directed toward a serious maternal pathology where the child's death is foreseen but not intended. Clinical realities are complex, and language varies. The principle is that medicine should seek the good of both patients and never treat death casually.

Ectopic pregnancy illustrates the tragic structure. The embryo cannot survive to viability in the fallopian tube, and continued development can rupture the tube and kill the mother. Treatment addresses a lethal pathological condition. The aim is not to prefer convenience over life but to prevent an otherwise catastrophic death when the child's survival is not possible. Similar judgments require competent clinicians, ethical transparency, and refusal of slogans.

Repentance, Forgiveness, and the Woman After Abortion

Abortion is morally grave because it intentionally ends developing human life. It is not the unforgivable sin. Some women were pressured by partners, parents, poverty, fear, clinicians, or churches that offered condemnation without help. Some men demanded abortion and then disappeared. Some carry grief for decades. Some feel relief and later confusion. The church should neither trivialise the act nor imprison the repentant person beneath it.

The gospel speaks truth and offers cleansing. Confession does not restore the lost child, but Christ's atonement is sufficient for guilty parents, negligent fathers, coercive relatives, and complicit professionals who repent. Pastoral care may include lament, naming the child, prayer, counselling, restitution through service, and patient healing. Grace is not denial. It is the mercy that meets the sinner after the truth has been told.

To the church: create conditions in which choosing life is materially possible. Support prenatal care, housing, food, education, adoption where appropriate, child care, and protection from violent partners. Discipline men who exploit and abandon. Honour mothers who carry difficult pregnancies. Welcome children without asking whether their conception was respectable. The credibility of pro-life witness is measured partly by the life offered after birth.

Disability, Dependence, and the Lie of Productive Worth

Modern societies speak often of independence while depending upon invisible networks of care. Infants cannot survive alone. Workers depend upon farmers, transport, sanitation, law, medicine, infrastructure, and inherited knowledge. The strong become weak through illness. The young become old if life is granted. Absolute independence is not adulthood. It is a myth sustained by other people's labour.

Disability exposes this truth. A person may require assistance with communication, mobility, feeding, decision-making, or personal care. Such dependence can be demanding for families and caregivers. It can involve pain, lost income, inaccessible buildings, social isolation, and exhaustion. Compassion must not romanticise these burdens. Caregivers need respite, material assistance, competent services, and permission to admit fatigue without being accused of lovelessness.

The moral danger appears when burden becomes a measure of worth. If dignity rests on autonomy, rational performance, consciousness, productivity, or contribution, people possess unequal dignity. The infant has little. The person in coma appears to have none. The intellectually disabled adult may never reach the preferred threshold. The elderly person may cross it in reverse. A society that establishes dignity by capacity creates a border patrol around humanity.

The image of God provides a different ground. It is bestowed, not achieved. First Corinthians 12:12-26 describes the church as a body in which members that seem weaker are indispensable and receive greater honour. Paul does not say they become valuable after proving usefulness. The community must reorder honour because worldly measures are false.

The 2024 United Nations Disability and Development Report documents persistent gaps in food security, health, energy, education, technology, and economic participation for persons with disabilities (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2024). These disadvantages are not evidence that disabled lives contain less good. They reveal social failure. A wheelchair user suffers not only from impairment but from stairs built without access. A child with communication differences suffers not only from condition but from a school unwilling to adapt. Society frequently creates the burden it later cites as a reason for exclusion.

[John 9:1-3](#) also corrects the reflex to interpret disability as punishment for a particular sin. Jesus refuses the disciples' narrow causal question concerning the man born blind. The passage should not be used to promise that every disability will be visibly healed in this age. It does reject shame and places the person within God's works rather than outside His concern.

Resurrection hope does not despise the disabled body. [Romans 8:18-25](#) teaches that all creation groans for liberation. Every present body is mortal and subject to decay. The gospel does not divide humanity into normal bodies and defective exceptions. It promises the redemption of the body to all who belong to Christ. Until then, the church honours embodied persons, seeks healing without making cure the price of belonging, and refuses the language of lives not worth living.

Ageing, Euthanasia, and the Redefinition of Care

[Leviticus 19:32](#) commands honour before grey hair. First Timothy 5:3-8 places care for widows and relatives within household faithfulness. [James 1:27](#) joins pure religion to care for orphans and widows. These texts do not make older people infallible or every family able to provide complex medical care alone. They establish intergenerational duty. A civilisation that celebrates longevity while isolating the old has extended years without extending belonging.

Population ageing makes this duty urgent. The United Nations projects continuing growth in the share of older persons as fertility falls and survival improves, with global fertility estimated at 2.25 births per woman in 2024 and population ageing accelerating across many regions (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2024). Longer life is not itself a crisis. The crisis is a social order that measures people by labour-market participation while failing to organise care for dependence.

Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are defended through autonomy, unbearable suffering, dignity, control, and compassion. The distinction varies legally. Euthanasia ordinarily involves a clinician administering the lethal substance. Assisted suicide involves supplying the means for the person to self-administer. Supporters argue that competent adults facing incurable suffering should not be forced to endure a dying process they find intolerable, and that regulation can protect voluntariness.

These arguments cannot be answered by pretending pain is easy. Cancer, motor neurone disease, breathlessness, paralysis, dementia, and psychiatric suffering can be terrifying. Families

may watch a loved person decline while medicine extends biological time without restoring health. Patients may fear loss of control, incontinence, dependency, or becoming a burden. Good pastoral care listens before it argues.

Yet a request for death is never formed in a moral vacuum. It arises within health systems, family relationships, financial pressures, cultural expectations, and available care. The World Health Organization estimates that tens of millions need palliative care each year while only a small minority receive it (World Health Organization, 2020). Where pain control, home care, disability support, mental-health treatment, and companionship are inadequate, “choice” may become the name given to abandonment.

Canada's official report recorded 16,499 medical-assistance-in-dying provisions in 2024, following 22,535 written requests, and noted a 6.9 percent increase in provisions from 2023 (Health Canada, 2025). In the Netherlands, review committees received 10,341 euthanasia notifications in 2025, representing about 6 percent of all deaths; reported cases included dementia, psychiatric disorders, and accumulated age-related conditions (Regional Euthanasia Review Committees, 2026). These figures do not prove that safeguards always fail. They show that assisted death can become a significant part of ordinary medical practice and extend beyond the public image of the imminently dying cancer patient.

The strongest regulated case insists on voluntary, well-considered request, unbearable suffering without prospect of improvement, informed consent, independent consultation, and procedural review. The Christian response should acknowledge the seriousness of these safeguards. It should then ask whether the state can authorise intentional killing as a form of care without changing the moral relationship among patient, family, clinician, and society.

The danger is not only illegal coercion. It is internalised pressure. A person who requires expensive care may come to believe that continuing to live is selfish. A disabled person may hear public praise for “dignified death” while fighting for basic assistance to live. A lonely elder may request death because no one visits. The offer itself can become a message: your death is one of the solutions society is prepared to fund.

Christian ethics distinguishes killing from allowing natural death. Medicine is not required to use every available intervention. Treatments may be withheld or withdrawn when they are futile, excessively burdensome, or no longer proportionate to their expected benefit. Food and ordinary care should not be withdrawn to produce death, but invasive ventilation, repeated resuscitation, or toxic therapy may rightly be declined. The intention is not to make the patient dead. It is to refuse treatment that cannot achieve a reasonable medical good and to accompany the person through dying.

Pain relief is likewise morally distinct from euthanasia. Adequate analgesia may carry foreseeable risks, but when the intention and dosing are proportionate relief of suffering rather than death, care remains care. Palliative medicine neither denies death nor appoints death as the treatment. It surrounds the dying person with symptom control, truth, relationship, prayer, and permission to complete the final creaturely task of dying.

Death remains an enemy in Scripture. Christ weeps at Lazarus's tomb and then confronts death. The gospel does not command believers to prolong dying at any cost. It does forbid calling the intentional destruction of a neighbour mercy. The Christian hope is not that suffering has no terror. It is that no suffering possesses final authority, and no dependent believer becomes disposable before the resurrection.

Domestic Abuse and the Corruption of Biblical Authority

No defence of created order is credible if it protects the person who destroys the household from within. Domestic abuse includes physical violence, sexual coercion, threats, stalking, economic control, isolation, humiliation, spiritual manipulation, and patterns of domination that make another

person live in fear. Children may be direct victims or witnesses whose nervous systems learn danger as home.

The World Health Organization's 2026 prevalence estimates indicate that roughly 840 million women have experienced physical or sexual partner violence or non-partner sexual violence during their lives, with intimate-partner violence particularly prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa (World Health Organization, 2026). Prevalence estimates are affected by underreporting, definitions, and survey methods, but the burden cannot be dismissed as rare dysfunction.

A husband has no biblical right to hit, rape, terrorise, imprison, impoverish, or threaten his wife. Marriage does not create sexual ownership. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to live with understanding and honour wives as co-heirs of the grace of life, warning that mistreatment obstructs prayer. A man who kneels in church after terrorising his wife has not moved closer to God by changing rooms.

Submission texts must not be used to obstruct safety. Biblical submission never requires participation in sin, concealment of crime, or surrender of lawful protection. Forgiveness does not eliminate consequences, reporting, restitution, boundaries, or discipline. A repentant abuser does not demand immediate return. He accepts exposure, investigation, loss of access where necessary, long-term accountability, and the possibility that trust may not be restored on his preferred timetable.

Church leaders must not conduct dangerous amateur mediation. Serious allegations require attention to immediate safety, competent assessment, civil reporting where required, medical care, documentation, and independent support. The desire to preserve the congregation's reputation is not pastoral wisdom. It is institutional idolatry.

Parents also corrupt authority when discipline becomes violence, terror, ridicule, or exploitation. [Ephesians 6:4](#) forbids provocation. [Colossians 3:21](#) warns fathers not to embitter children lest they become discouraged. Correction should be proportionate, calm, purposeful, and governed by love. A parent who strikes from rage is not training a child in righteousness. He is training the child to associate power with unpredictability.

The conservative church must repent where it has treated a family's continuity as more sacred than the lives inside it. The progressive church must not answer by treating every authority, role, or discipline as oppressive. The biblical path protects covenant by confronting covenant-breakers. Sometimes the most faithful act toward a violent household is separation, legal restraint, and public truth while the church waits for fruits worthy of repentance.

The Strongest Case for the Autonomous Family

The modern case for flexible family and autonomous life can now be stated fairly.

Traditional marriage has often confined women to unpaid dependence, protected male violence, penalised divorce, stigmatised infertility, excluded unmarried persons, and hidden child abuse. Biological parenthood does not guarantee love. Adoptive, blended, single-parent, and same-sex households may provide stability and affection where biological parents failed. The state should therefore protect caring relationships rather than privilege one disputed religious model.

Children are persons with emerging autonomy, not parental property. Professional intervention may protect them from abuse, neglect, medical misinformation, or parental prejudice. Education should expose children to social diversity and equip them to make informed decisions.

Reproductive technology enables people facing infertility, disease, singleness, or nontraditional partnership to form families. Informed adults can consent to gamete donation and surrogacy. Embryos lack consciousness and developed interests, so selection or disposal does not carry the same moral weight as harm to a child. Genetic testing can prevent severe suffering.

Abortion protects bodily autonomy, equality, health, education, and economic survival. Compelled pregnancy imposes burdens no other citizen is required to bear for another person. Restriction may drive abortion underground and increase maternal harm.

Assisted dying respects competent adults who judge their suffering unbearable. Safeguards can distinguish free choice from coercion. Refusing assistance may prolong agony and impose a religious account of life on plural societies.

This case draws moral strength from genuine suffering and institutional failure. Christians should admit that some defenders of autonomy are responding to hypocrisy, violence, neglect, and exclusion rather than consciously rebelling against God. Yet compassion cannot be measured by the urgency of the suffering alone. The proposed remedy must also be true.

The autonomous model cannot explain why consent is morally authoritative without a prior account of the person and the good. Consent is necessary in many relationships, but adults can consent to exploitation. Choice requires an object worthy of choosing. Technology can fulfil desire without establishing that fulfilment is just. Law can recognise arrangements without creating moral reality.

Most importantly, the autonomous account consistently marginalises the person with the least power to consent. The child did not consent to anonymous genetic separation. The embryo cannot consent to selection. The unborn child cannot argue bodily rights. The surrogate's future emotional response cannot be fully contracted. The disabled person lives within social expectations that shape the apparent freedom of a death request. Autonomy is strongest in the adult purchaser and weakest in the dependent person whose life is being arranged.

Biblical ethics begins from a different centre. The question is not only, "What do I choose?" but, "Whom has God placed within the reach of my responsibility?" Freedom is not the power to escape every given bond. It is the Spirit-enabled capacity to love God and neighbour truthfully within them.

Africa Between Communal Strength and Cultural Sin

Africa should not be treated as one moral culture. Legal systems, religions, kinship arrangements, urbanisation, fertility, and family practices vary widely. Yet many African societies retain strong extended-family expectations that challenge Western individualism. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, clans, and congregations may share child care, crisis support, funeral obligations, elder care, and moral oversight. This communal memory contains wisdom: the person belongs within generations.

That strength can also become control. Bridewealth may express gratitude and bind families, but it can be misused as a purchase price that makes a wife appear owned. Extended kin can mediate conflict, or pressure a victim to remain silent for family honour. Respect for elders can preserve wisdom, or shield wrongdoing. Fertility can be celebrated, or weaponised against infertile women. Communal responsibility requires biblical purification, not romantic praise.

Child marriage remains a serious problem. UNICEF estimates that about one in five women globally were married before age eighteen, with the largest burden in sub-Saharan Africa and progress too slow to meet international goals (UNICEF, 2025a). Poverty, insecurity, custom, limited schooling, and gender inequality interact. Biblical appeals to family authority cannot justify giving a child into a union she lacks maturity and freedom to enter.

Urbanisation and labour migration place different pressure on households. A parent may leave home to provide. A couple may live across borders. Children may be raised by grandparents. These arrangements can display sacrifice, but prolonged separation also creates loneliness, sexual temptation, divided authority, and emotional distance. Sangwa and Mutabazi (2025b) rightly call for intentional boundaries, communication, covenant practices, and institutional policies that take family stability seriously rather than treating workers as disembodied units.

Digital exposure is growing faster than parental capacity. Schools and churches may possess limited safeguarding systems. Youth betting, pornography, influencer culture, and online exploitation enter through inexpensive mobile access. The answer is not technological panic. It is formation, accountability, law enforcement, platform responsibility, and parental competence.

International cooperation also requires discernment. Health, education, women's safety, poverty reduction, disability inclusion, and child protection are genuine goods. African resistance should not

baptise domestic violence, unequal inheritance, or child marriage as cultural sovereignty. At the same time, grants, accreditation, professional standards, and development programmes can carry moral assumptions about sexuality, reproduction, family, and autonomy. A funding condition is not neutral merely because it is written in technical language.

The church must test every programme by Scripture and evidence. It should cooperate where neighbour-love is served and refuse where assistance requires moral surrender. It should document coercion rather than invent it. Not every international initiative is a conspiracy. Not every local tradition is innocent. The Creator judges donors and elders alike.

The Church as an Intergenerational Household

The local church should be the place where created order is neither idolised nor abandoned. It honours marriage, but does not treat married people as a superior spiritual class. It honours singleness, following the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul, and refuses to describe unmarried adults as incomplete. It welcomes children without turning worship into child-centred entertainment. It honours elders without granting immunity. It receives disabled persons as members, not ministry projects. It supports widows, caregivers, infertile couples, adoptive families, and single parents.

This household needs concrete practices.

Churches should teach marriage before weddings and continue after them. Premarital preparation should address doctrine, conflict, money, sexuality, fertility, work, family boundaries, digital habits, and abuse. Married couples need mentoring that is accountable rather than intrusive. Men should be disciplined toward fidelity, emotional maturity, work, fatherhood, and repentance, not merely public leadership.

Pregnancy support should be visible and practical. A frightened woman should know whom to contact, where to sleep, how to access medical care, and whether the congregation will stand beside her after birth. Fathers should be summoned to responsibility. Adoption and foster care should be approached with training and child-centred wisdom, not romantic heroism.

Safeguarding should be written, known, and enforced. Churches need background checks where lawful, two-adult practices, reporting protocols, clear boundaries, and independent handling of allegations. A charismatic leader should never receive private access merely because people trust his anointing. Trust without structure invites betrayal.

Families need digital discipleship. Parents should be equipped to understand platforms, privacy, pornography, grooming, and attention design. Young people need more than prohibition. They need a compelling account of embodiment, friendship, vocation, beauty, courage, chastity, and hope.

Care for the elderly and disabled must extend beyond occasional visits. Transportation, respite, meals, accessibility, advocacy, medical accompaniment, and financial support are forms of worship. The church should become a family where a person who cannot repay is not treated as a failed investment.

The household of faith also relativises the biological family. Jesus teaches that allegiance to Him can divide households and creates a new family among those who do God's will. Biological loyalty must never protect abuse, obstruct conversion, or outrank truth. Family is a created good, not a saviour. The church is not built from perfect households. It is built from sinners adopted through Christ.

A Word to the Households Standing Before God

To husbands who dominate: the throne in your house does not belong to you. Christ's headship cannot be imitated through intimidation. Lay down the weapon of Scripture misused. Confess violence, control, adultery, pornography, and neglect. Accept consequences. Love your wife as a person for whom Christ died, not as an instrument for your comfort.

To fathers who have abandoned children: return to responsibility. You may not be able to restore the relationship quickly. Begin with truth, support, consistency, apology, and patience. Do not demand the child's trust as payment for your regret.

To women carrying unjust burdens: your suffering is seen by God. Submission does not require silence before evil. Seek safe, competent help. The shame belongs to the person committing violence. The church should stand with you, not return you unprotected to danger.

To infertile couples: your grief is not proof of weak faith. Ask difficult ethical questions before treatment. Do not allow a clinic, relative, prophet, or congregation to hurry you through choices that affect embryonic lives, donors, surrogates, and future children. Your marriage possesses worth without parenthood.

To people conceived through donor technologies or surrogacy: you are not a controversy. You bear God's image. Ethical questions about adult decisions do not place a shadow over your personhood. Your questions about origins deserve respect.

To mothers pressured toward abortion: fear does not have to decide alone. Seek help before those who benefit from your silence make the choice for you. Your life matters. The child's life matters. The church must offer more than a sentence.

To those who participated in abortion and now repent: come into the light. Christ does not minimise death, and He does not reject the contrite. There is cleansing, lament, forgiveness, and a future of truthful service.

To disabled people: you do not need to justify your life through inspiration, productivity, or courage. You are not a lesson for others. You are a neighbour and potential brother or sister in Christ, worthy of access, friendship, patience, and honour.

To elderly people who fear becoming a burden: dependence does not cancel dignity. Tell the church what you need. Receive care without shame. Your prayers, memories, presence, and suffering belong within the body.

To exhausted caregivers: asking for help is not abandonment. Rest, respite, medical care, and shared labour are part of faithful stewardship. The church must not praise sacrifice while refusing to carry any of it.

To clinicians and counsellors: technical competence does not remove moral accountability. You stand near life at its most vulnerable. Refuse deception, coercion, careless promises, and the reduction of persons to cases. Where conscience is pressured, seek lawful and faithful ways to protect both truth and patient care.

To teachers and lawmakers: children and dependent persons are not raw material for ideology. Protect them from violence and exploitation. Do not assume that professional status creates moral infallibility. Law can restrain evil, but law cannot make rebellion good.

To pastors: the family sermon will judge you first. Do not preach submission to wives while overlooking violent men. Do not celebrate children while operating unsafe ministries. Do not condemn abortion while offering no aid. Do not praise elders while leaving them alone. Do not call every family dispute persecution against your counsel. Shepherds remain accountable to the Chief Shepherd.

The Last Second Before Midnight

We are living in what may fittingly be called the last second before midnight. This is a moral and spiritual image, not a timetable. No one knows the day or hour of the Lord's return ([Matthew 24:36](#)). The church must not turn current demographic, legal, technological, or medical developments into a calendar that Scripture has not supplied.

Yet the hour is urgent because life is brief, judgment is certain, deception is growing, and Christ has commanded watchfulness. Readiness is not demonstrated by recognising every global trend while domestic sin remains protected. A man may identify every sign and still be unready because he terrorises his wife. A woman may speak continually of the rapture while neglecting a dependent

parent. A pastor may preach prophecy while concealing abuse. A congregation may oppose abortion and love money. A parent may fear ideological schools while allowing a device to disciple the child without supervision.

The wise virgins were distinguished by prepared lamps, not superior speculation ([Matthew 25:1-13](#)). Readiness enters the household as repentance, fidelity, protection, truthfulness, forgiveness, provision, sexual holiness, care for the weak, and endurance. The Bride prepares for the Bridegroom by refusing the spirit of an age that calls covenant captivity, children commodities, dependence indignity, and death compassion.

Christ is not returning for a church that has perfected the traditional family and no longer needs grace. He is returning for a people washed by His blood, sanctified by His Spirit, and learning obedience under His Word. Some come from stable homes. Others come from divorce, abandonment, infertility, abuse, abortion, widowhood, disability, or grief. The gospel does not erase history. It gathers sinners into a new household and teaches them to stop reproducing the sins that wounded them.

There is still time to repent, but there is no time to delay repentance. Husbands must put away tyranny. Fathers must return to responsibility. Parents must recover discipleship. Churches must protect children. Clinicians must examine what technical power is doing to human dignity. Families must honour the old. Societies must refuse the category of unwanted life. The wounded must be believed and protected. The guilty must confess. The forgiven must walk in newness of life.

Conclusion: The Household Is Not for Sale

This chapter has followed the sexual revolution beyond desire into the wider household. Once embodied sex, one-flesh marriage, and procreative meaning are detached from creation, marriage becomes customisable, parenthood divisible, childhood contestable, reproduction commercial, disability selectable, and death available as a service. The progression is not mechanically inevitable, and its advocates do not share one motive. It arises because the same anthropology governs each dispute: the autonomous self seeks authority over given limits and increasingly asks technology, law, markets, and institutions to confirm the claim.

Scripture offers another order. Male and female bear equal dignity without becoming interchangeable. Marriage is covenant, not subscription. Authority exists to serve. Parents receive children as gifts and answer to God for their formation. The unborn child is a neighbour. Disability does not reduce humanity. Dependence summons care. Ageing deserves honour. Medicine should heal, relieve, and accompany without converting death into treatment. The church becomes a household where the biological family is honoured but never allowed to protect sin or replace the family created in Christ.

The biblical alternative is demanding because love is demanding. It asks the strong to spend themselves for the weak, adults to place children's good before adult desire, men to carry responsibility rather than merely claim authority, communities to make choosing life materially possible, and believers to remain faithful when fulfilment is delayed. It also offers hope. Created order is not a prison built by an indifferent God. It is the grammar of gifts that sin has distorted and Christ is restoring.

The house is not beyond repair. The Foundation remains. The Cornerstone has not moved. The Word still enters locked rooms. The Spirit still convicts. Christ still forgives covenant-breakers, cleanses the sexually impure, restores the abandoned, receives children, honours the despised, and defeats death.

The next chapter turns from the household to the marketplace inside the sanctuary. The same autonomous desire that converts marriage, fertility, health, and longevity into purchasable fulfilment enters the church through prosperity teaching, manifestation, positive confession, and transactional giving. When desire is baptised, greed learns to speak in the name of faith. Chapter 11 therefore examines the prosperity gospel and the baptism of ambition.

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