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Last week, people from all walks of life traveled near and far to enjoy a day of thanks with their family and friends. AAA projects 43.6 million Americans journeyed 50 miles or more from home during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. What is a family? Why are they important? Although the dictionary defines "family" as any group of persons closely related by blood, as parents, children, uncles, aunts, and cousins, we know first hand that the family construct is more that that. Family is the basic building blocks for communities, and it is a big part of the American culture. This family phenomenon is noteworthy and worth us taking a look at its basic foundation and development.

What is the basic foundation for a family unit? A family is more than a household unit. In the Bible, every family represented a microcosm of the community within which it lived. Therefore, when families failed, the community itself failed. In times of crisis, families were relied upon to support and strengthen the community. For example, Moses was charged to offer the following order to his followers: "Make sure there isn't a man or woman among your families or tribes who turns away from the Lord our God (Deuteronomy 29:18)." The family served as a keeper of the core values of the community in which it lived. Thus, family is something more than a household unit.

A family is more than a political or religious concept. According to the Bible, "family" is not a man-made concept. Rather, it originates from the mind of God. As recorded in the book of Genesis, family is an intentional creation of the creator, and it is directly blessed by God. No sooner after God create man and woman that he blessed them and told them to create a family: "God blessed them," states Genesis 1:28, continuing, "He said to them, 'Have children and increase your numbers.'" The concept of family predates politics and organized religions. So, rather than simply being a political or religious concept, family is an undeniably divine concept.

A family is more than an Old Testament biblical teaching. Even deep into the New Testament, the concept of family is valued as a foundation that was especially designed by God. Paul verifies this fact in his letter to the Ephesians, commenting, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named (Ephesians 3:14-15)." The New Testament reminds us that you will find families in heaven and earth, and in ancient and modern day times. Families are a universal concept that supersedes the Old Testament.

What is a family? It is an important part of today's society. Family is more than a domestic unit that is only defined by the number of parents and children. It connects us to others outside of our households. Your bloodline is only one part of your family construct. Although your family unit is defined by you, it is measured by your community. Your culture, religion, and language are also important ingredients and they will bind you with others of like conviction. Family is natural and spiritual. Forged in the mind of God, it is and will forever be divinely created.

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