Covenant Family Training Retreat

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*This article is transcribed from notes from a live presentation –* The Dominion Family Training Retreat (2015)*. Those notes were designed for the spoken rather than written medium. I have only modified the text at a minimal level to adapt it to the written mode for reading. It is not sufficiently edited. Some sections are left in an outline format. It does not conform to publishable standards for source referencing (among other things). The training presentation consisted of five different sessions. I make reference to other “articles” which in the original were the different sessions of the training presentation (the titles of which were:* Restoring Families as Multigenerational Teams, The Biblical Covenant Structure, Creating Your Family Mission Statement, Family Governance: The Family Constitution, and, Introducing Generational Discipleship and Building Generational Wealth).

# Covenantal-Dominion Families: The Biblical Covenant Structure: Covenant = Succession = Multigenerational Families

Why are we beginning our training on what I’m calling Multigenerational Families with an explanation of the structure of the Biblical covenant? The short answer is that the reason why biblical families are multigenerational is precisely because they are covenantal. I was first introduced to the idea of the multigenerational family before I learned about the covenantal nature of the family. It was in the process of studying the multigenerational aspect of the family that I discovered that the reason it was multigenerational is because it is first covenantal. We are going to be looking at how the last characteristic of the biblical convenatal structure is about succession – how the covenant is passed from one generation to the next. The reason why we need to talk about the Biblical covenant structure is that we need a robust theology for why Christian families are to be multigenerational. If we do not have this theology of the covenant firmly in place, we will not be able to pass on a culture of faithfulness to our descendents in the long term. Nor will we be able to think and act creatively as covenantal families if we don’t understand why it is what we are doing. Without the theology, we can only blindly follow forms without any progress.

# Background to 5-Point Covenant Structure

Are we talking about a Covenant (singular) or Covenants (plural)? The short answer is yes to both! On the one hand, there are multiple covenants in the Bible. The big, obvious ones are with Noah, then Abraham, Israel at Mt. Sinai, King David, and the New Covenant. Each of them are distinct and unique. On the other hand, each of them are related to each other. There is discontinuity as well as continuity. There are common elements that run through each of them. However, what we are going to be talking about in this training module is not so much the *content* of the common elements in these covenants, but rather the structural elements that are common among them.

The biblical teaching on the covenant is like the Trinity. What I mean by this is that, like the doctrine of the Trinity, the theology of the structure of a biblical covenant is not explicitly taught in condensed passages, but rather discovered by a broad reading of the entire Scriptures. We don’t see a passage in the Bible that looks like the Nicene Creed right? But we know that the Nicene Creed is a faithful summary of what the whole Bible teaches about the Trinity. In the same way, the fact that there is not an explicit exposition of the covenant in Scripture does not make it any less important or less central than the doctrine of the Trinity.

What I’m going to be doing in this training is relaying one scholar’s exposition of the structure of the Biblical covenant. We don’t have the time here to go through every single relevant Bible passage and analyze each verse. Ray Sutton is one of the first Bible scholars who “discovered,” so to speak, the common structural elements in the Biblical covenants, so we will be looking at his particular outline in what follows [disclosure – much of this section taken closely from Sutton’s book, That You May Prosper].

In addition, we will be referencing sections of the book of Deuteronomy as we look at the structural parts of the Biblical covenant. The reason for this is that Deuteronomy, more than any other portion of Scripture, follows the covenantal pattern. Here’s what Sutton says about Deuteronomy and the covenant:

“But how do we know Deuteronomy is a covenant? Moses says, ‘He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments [Words]’ (Deut. 4:13). Deuteronomy is the *second* giving of the Ten Commandments, a ‘new’ covenant so to speak. Moses says of the book as a whole, ‘Keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do’ (Deut. 29:9). Deuteronomy is definitely a covenant document.” - Ray Sutton, *That You May Proper*

# Exposition of 5-Points

## Acronym: THEOS

* **T**ranscendence (Deut. 1:1-5)
* **H**ierarchy (Deut. 1:6 - 4:49)
* **E**thics (Deut. 5-26)
* **O**ath (aka, Sanctions, Ratification) (Deut. 27-30)
* **S**uccession (aka, Continuity) (Deut. 31-34)

Sutton thought the covenantal structure found in Deuteronomy and the rest of Scripture had five main parts to it. The parts can be divided in different ways. The point is not that there is precisely five parts, or six parts, or some other exact number of pieces, but that there are indeed parts, and there is a logical and relational order among them. The parts are the diversity within the unity.

One advantage of coming to understand the structural parts of the covenant is that you will better be able to identify if a particular Scriptural passage is covenantal in nature by noticing if it exhibits some or all of the pieces of the structure. As the saying goes, if it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it’s probably a duck. The same holds for recognizing the covenant in Scripture.

We have a handy little acronym for labeling and remembering the parts to the covenant in the Greek word THEOS. The first part of the covenant has to do with Transcendence and this is an emphasis in the first few verses of Deuteronomy. The second part has to do with Hierarchy and this is emphasized in Deuteronomy chapters 1-4. The Ethics section is always the largest part of a covenant as you can see from how many chapters it occupies in Deuteronomy (5-26). The fourth section is Oath, and the last Succession. People give the parts different names. Sutton actually used the term Sanctions instead of Oath for the fourth part and Continuity rather than Succession for the fifth part. I prefer the term Ratification myself for the fourth part. For beginners to the covenant, however, the labels that go with THEOS are a helpful way to remember the different parts.

Another introductory point that I need to mention at the beginning here is that each of the components of the biblical covenant are all inter-related such that often times it is hard to talk about one without referring to the others. And sometimes the points we make about one of the pieces will sound very similar to parts of the others. After you get a grasp of both the whole and the parts, it will become more clear why this is so, but for now, I wanted you to be aware of that so you don’t get unnecessarily confused.

Let’s look at the first component of the biblical covenant – Transcendence.

## Transcendence

A biblical covenant begins with a preamble where God declares His transcendence. This does not mean God is distant, but that He is distinct. It is a declaration of his Lordship; His absolute sovereign authority.

The Deuteronomic covenant begins with a declaration of transcendence, when it says, “Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord commanded him to give to them” (Deut. 1:3). The covenant declares God’s Lordship by distinguishing God’s words from Moses’.

Isaiah 45: 5-7 is a classic text that helps illustrate the transcendence principle clearly:

I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the Lord, who does all these things.

Let’s look at few principles of transcendence:

* **Principle of Creation**
  + Unlike pagan views, there is a *distinction* between Creator and creation.
  + Only a Creator God relates covenantally with His creation.
* **Principle of Transcendence *AND* Immanence**
  + “No other being is fully transcendent, so no other being is universally present. God alone is omnipresent (present everywhere).”
  + God is “near,” not by being of a similar essence as us (pagan), but by means of the covenant.

The diagram below Cornelius Van Til used with his students to picture both the transcendent and covenantal relationship between God and man. The first thing to notice is that God and man are separate. Man, the creature, does not share in God’s being in any form. The second thing to notice is that how God relates to man is through covenant. Again, the principle is that because God is transcendent He is therefore distinct and distant from man, but he comes close through the covenant relationship. We’ll be contrasting this diagram with a pagan model in a moment.

Creator-Creature Diagram-3.pdf

The next principle of Transcendence is that the Covenant relationship is created by a legal-ethical declaration. Think of the foundation of God’s relationship with Adam: after God creates Adam He says, “be fruitful, take dominion, don’t eat of this tree.” And then think of the foundation of the covenantal relationship God had with Abraham. God says, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur…. walk before me and be blameless that I may multiply you greatly.” Then, of course, the marriage relationship illustrates this the best. We all know that the marriage relationship begins on a legal basis. And by legal, we don’t mean legal in terms of the civil government. A wedding ceremony makes a couple legally married in terms of God’s covenantal standards. It’s His law, not man’s law that makes a marriage a marriage. The point again – transcendence implies that covenantal relationships are legal relationships.

### Pagan/ Non-Transcendence

The diagram below is a bit busy but basically what it is showing is that the pagan view of the relationship between God and man is that man’s being and God’s being are mixed in some way. The symbol of the totem pole reflects the idea that evil or inferior beings are at the bottom and the highest god or gods are at the top and man is somewhere in the middle. Even though man is in the middle, so to speak, he shares in the same essence of God in some way. This is what is called a chain-of-being understanding of the relationship between God and man. And there’s only basically two options here. There is either the covenantal view of the Bible, or this pagan chain-of-being view. Pagan views come in lots of different flavors which this diagram is trying to convey. The left side of the totem pole in this diagram illustrates the classic pagan view which is more mystical and is more common in the Eastern religions. The right side represents the Rationalist pagan view. The horizontal diagram on the bottom represents an evolutionary model… man is evolving into Godhood. But all the non-covenantal, pagan views of transcendence and immanence have one thing in common: they teach a union of essence. God’s being and man’s being run into each in some way.

Chain of Being Totem.pdf

Fallen man wants either a transcendent-only god or an immanent-only god, but he does not want a personal God, for such a God is a covenantal God. Covenant means law, law means disobedience, and disobedience means judgment. Fallen men above all want to escape God’s judgment because they are disobedient.

Take Deism for example. With Deism you have a false, counterfeit transcendence. God is “too” distant. For Deists, the personal God of the Bible is too distinct for comfort. On the other hand, the impersonal god of deism is too distant to be taken seriously.

Or consider Pantheism: Pantheism represents a false immanence. In this case God is “too” immanent. The personal God of the Bible for Pantheists is too close for comfort. And on the other side, the impersonal god of pantheism is “too close” to be taken seriously.

To summarize: the first element of the Biblical covenant has to do with Transcendence. God is distinct from man but He comes close by means of a covenantal relationship. That covenantal relationship is both legal and personal. The next element of the Covenant is Hierarchy.

## Hierarchy

The second element of the Biblical covenant is often referred to as the principle of Hierarchy. It can also be called the principle of Representation. God establishes a *representative* system through which to govern. He mediates His judgment on earth through a relationship of human representatives and subordination.

The way the biblical covenant communicates the principle of hierarchy is through the telling of history. So you will see some scholars refer to this as the historical section of the covenant as well. In the first four chapters of Deuteronomy Moses relates the history of God’s dealings with Israel. Much of the history of God’s dealings with His people is a history of how he has related to them through his representatives: think of Adam, Abraham, Moses, prophet, priest, king, etc.

Deuteronomy 1:15 is an explicit hierarchy text that can help us see it more clearly in a concise manner:

So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes.

This is a statement from Sutton explaining how Transcendence connects with the Hierarchy component of the covenant:

“If God is transcendent, the true Covenantal Suzerain, then He establishes His authority on earth. He makes His Lordship visible by establishing ***representatives***, a hierarchy. He establishes delegated authority…. Biblical hierarchy is a series of courts with delegated authorities over each level. The procedure is from the bottom up.”

### The Three Covenantal Institutions

What are the three covenantal institutions? Yes, the Church, the State, and the Family. And now here’s a little bit tougher question: What are the typical symbols for each of these institutions? Yes, the Sword, the Keys, and the Rod.

* + The Sword: State (capital punishment)
  + The Keys: Church (baptism/communion: entrance/excommunication)
  + The Rod: Family (discipline, education)

One thing that is important to understand here, is that in a society that conforms to the Biblical standards, each covenantal institution does NOT exercise authority and discipline into the territory of the others. You can walk through history and find that one or the other of these institutions were intruding into the sphere of the other and that intrusion was one of the major causes of that society’s problems. In the late middle ages in Europe, it was the church that was invading the space of the state. In our day, the state is invading the space of the Family. And it is important that I make this point. We are in an age in which we must reassert the place of the family and elevate its importance. But we should not be mistaken that the Family is immune from being guilty of this. There have been times in history in which the Family overstepped its bounds and intruded into the realms of church and state. In ancient times, we assume that families primarily worshipped gods like Zeus or Aphrodite. The reality, however, is that families worshipped their ancestors much more faithfully than these other gods. As multigenerational families mature in strength, we would be naïve to assume the temptation to step out of our covenantal boundaries will not exist. To remain faithfully covenantal, we need to stay within our covenantal bounds.

## Ethics

The next section of the covenant is Ethics and outlines the rules and laws God’s people are to obey. The ethics segment of the biblical covenant always takes up the largest amount of space. In Deuteronomy, the ethics section occupies chapters 5-26.

God establishes an *ethical relationship between cause and effect.* He dictates the terms (commandments) under which man can have an ethical relationship with Him. These terms are the standard of the covenant. Man is called to be faithful to God by submitting to them. If he submits (covenant-keeping), he is blessed. If he does not (covenant-breaking) he is cursed. He is either a covenant-keeper or a covenant-breaker.

Biblical religion is based on faithfulness to the Word of God (*ethics*). Pagan religion is always some form of manipulation through one means or another -- *magic, manipulation (state power), mysticism, etc.*

This next point of Covenantal Ethics is crucial. In short, it is that dominion is achieved primarily through covenantal obedience. This is how Ray Sutton says it:

“The formula for victory is simple: keep the covenant and dominion will be the proper effect. The key to success is not a secret in the Bible. It is revealed, and it is illustrated time and again.”

Deuteronomy 7: 12-16 is a passage that more clearly shows the connection between obedience and victory:

“And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. 13He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you. 14 You shall be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock. 15 And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you knew, will he inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you. 16 ***And you shall consume all the peoples that the Lord your God will give over to you.*** Your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.”

For us, our enemies are not “flesh and blood,” but carry the names of things like naturalism, humanism, occultism, apathy, unbelief, etc. While there is a place for direct assault on these things, i.e., apologetics, political activism, etc. – the *primary* means of victory is indirect: our obedience to the covenantal standards of God’s law must come first.

## Oath or Sanctions (Blessings and Cursings)

Now this might sound weird, but this section of the covenant, Oath, is my favorite. The reason why it is my favorite is that, for me at least, understanding this section, is what unlocks the essence of the biblical covenant. If you get this section, you get the covenant.

So, who remembers what Deuteronomy 27 and 28 is famously about? Yes, the blessings and cursings of the covenant.

This is perhaps the most complex section of the covenant. While the term “sanction” typically has a negative connotation, in this context, the sanction is not only for cursing for disobedience, but also blessing for obedience. Think, consequences – either good or bad.

This aspect of the biblical covenant could also be called ***ratification***. A ***ceremony*** is held in the presence of witnesses where a “self-maledictory oath” (a death curse) is taken thereby binding God’s people to the terms of the covenant He initiated. The key words to note here are *blessing* and *cursing*, *ratification*, *ceremony*, *oath*, and *witnesses*.

You can see why this may be the most complex part of the covenant. We don’t even know which word to use as the primary label. I mentioned at the beginning that I prefer the term *ratification*. This is because I think that term best captures all the other terms. On the other hand, *ceremony* is a good word picture to have in your mind to help you more easily remember what this part of the covenant is all about. Whenever there is an initiation of a new covenant, or change in the administration of a covenant, there is always a ceremony, or a ritual that goes along with it.

Here’s a couple of examples that illustrate the oath part of the covenant. Remember what happens in Genesis 15? This is where God initiates the covenant with Abraham. The reason why you hear the phrase, “to cut covenant” is because of the reference to the animals sacrificed and torn in two. Do you recall how a “normal” blood covenant is supposed to work between two parties as regards passing between torn animals? And secondly, what does this passing between the animals signify? The parties are saying, in effect, if I don’t keep the terms of this covenant, may I be torn to pieces like these animals. That’s how a normal blood covenant is supposed to work. What is abnormal about the covenant made here in Genesis 15? Yes, only God passes through the animals; Abraham is asleep. Listen to this explanation from the book, *Kingdom through Covenant*:

“When God made covenant with his people, he did something no human being would have even considered doing. In the usual blood covenant, each party was responsible for keeping only his side of the promise. When God made covenant with Abraham, however, he promised to keep both sides of the agreement. ‘If this covenant is broken, Abraham, for whatever reason – for My unfaithfulness or yours – I will pay the price,’ said God. ‘If you or your descendants, for whom you are making this covenant, fail to keep it, I will pay the price in blood.’ And at that moment, Almighty God pronounced the death sentence on his Son Jesus.”

Honestly, the connection with the gospel is not the main reason why I’m drawing our attention to Genesis 15, but I can’t look at Genesis 15 without noting how it is one of the classic OT texts that preaches the gospel. What I wanted us to notice for our purposes is that this cutting of covenant involved promises made with a curse upon oneself for not keeping the promise – in another words an oath. And it wasn’t just a verbal affair. This was a ritual, or a ceremony. Actual animals were sacrificed and a specific order of actions was followed (a ceremonial liturgy).

The next example comes from a familiar part of a traditional marriage ceremony. Everyone knows this classic part of the marriage oath, “..till death do us part.” Now we all know this refers to the commitment to remain faithful to our spouse our whole lives. But I learned that originally it had an additional reference. What is the maximum penalty for adultery under the Old Covenant? Yes, death. Originally this part of the oath was also a way of saying, ‘if I am unfaithful to the marriage covenant, may I die. May I be put to death.’ It’s invoking the covenantal curse upon disobedience. Can you imagine how much adultery there would be in a culture where people agreed to their execution before marriage if they were unfaithful to their spouse? Something to think about. What I wanted us to see is that the marriage covenant once again shows us clearly how a biblical covenant is structured in this case with an oath taken in the context of a ceremony.

A few more additional points about the covenantal oath:

* “Sanctions are blessing and cursing. Blessing always has to do with the reception of inheritance (Gen. 48:1-22 [Ephraim & Manasseh]). This inheritance is personal and cultural, everything from holiness to financial and civilizational prosperity (Deut. 28:1-4).”
* “There is one covenant with two sanctions (blessing and cursing). There are not two covenants, one being law and the other promise (“grace”). In terms of the biblical covenant structure, pitting law against grace in this particular way is a false dichotomy.”
* “The oath is made by faith but not to the exclusion of certain symbols of faith.”
* WITNESSES: “Witnesses make the ratification official. They testify to the fact that a covenant was actually made (the recipient’s potential lack of seriousness does not nullify the covenant being made and the sanction applying to him). … If the covenant is broken, the witnesses could be called forward to prosecute the covenant-breaker (called a covenant lawsuit).”
* ADOPTION: The ratification process creates a transfer of name and is functionally an adoption. Cutting covenant adopts the initiate into the Kingdom of God. He receives a new name and inheritance.

## Continuity or Succession

This final component of the covenant provides the mechanism for the covenant to be transferred from generation to generation. It is based on the principle of inheritance. Deuteronomy 31-34 is all about this transference of inheritance.

As we come to the question of succession or continuity with the covenant, think back to how the first covenants with Adam and Abraham were made. The dominion task given to Adam is ongoing and requires more than just himself to accomplish. He is going to have to pass on this task to his descendants. The covenant with Abraham explicitly includes his descendants as heirs of the promise. How does this promise get passed from generation to generation? Now think of the patriarchs from Abraham to Joseph. In each transfer of generations, a major issue is inheritance. Is it going to be Ishmael or Isaac? Jacob or Esau? Manasseh or Ephraim? The issue is, not who is the natural heir, but who is the covenantal heir. By the time we get to Deuteronomy 31-34, the Son of the Covenant is now Israel – as a people. God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai. With the passing of Moses’ leadership, the question is, how is Israel going to inherit the covenant?

# Three Phases of Succession

1. Covenant Renewal: Looks to the Past
2. Conquest: Looks to the Present
3. Discipleship: Looks to the Future

Sutton found that the ratification part of the covenant (the fourth part) was just the beginning. It needed to be confirmed and that’s what the succession part of the covenant does. He also found that the inheritance promised in the continuity provisions does not come all at once but in stages following faithful action. Those three stages are Covenant Renewal, Conquest and Discipleship.

Since the multigenerational nature of families is our main theme it would be good to go over Ray Sutton’s discussion of how covenantal continuity succeeds or fails. He calls this a process of confirmation.

The first phase is covenant renewal. Covenant Renewal connects God’s people with their past. For Israelites this was done through the annual feasts. For the church this is done primarily through the Lord’s Supper – observing Communion. The meeting described in Deut. 31-34 itself is basically a covenant renewal service. Every generation needs to say in their own way: “…As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

The second element required to preserve continuity is conquest. Conquest is about the present. Deut. 31-34 spends a lot of time exhorting the Israelites about how and why they are to take possession of Canaan. How are God’s enemies subdued? Not by brute power, but by the obedience of His people. Jericho is a picture of this for us. The Israelites obeyed God in the specific way He commanded and God brought the walls down. The same is true today. We don’t just conduct religious services. God’s enemies are subdued and we take dominion when we move out into the world obeying God’s covenant. “Covenant renewal is supposed to move out from around the throne of God and into civilization. If it doesn’t, the inheritance is lost.” Another way of saying this is that a theology of cultural passivity will eventually result in covenantal death of a group.

The third aspect of confirming the covenant is discipleship. Discipleship looks to the future. The children of God’s covenant people must be trained in His covenant law or else the next generation will be lost.

A lack of faithfulness in any one of these three areas results in discontinuity, or disinheritance from the covenant.

The following is a good quote from Sutton that connects the idea of the covenant with multigenerational family discipleship:

“…Deuteronomy specifies that only a certain kind of person can fulfill the commandments of God, a true son of the covenant. The ethics segment instructs the fathers to be true sons of God themselves by teaching their own sons the commandments (Deut. 6: 1-26). The fathers imaged God by training their sons to image them. And when the sons followed their fathers in obedience to God, the second generation also imaged its Heavenly Father. In other words, a faithful son manifests his sonship by being a true image-bearer of his True Father, God (Gen. 5:1ff.)”

We have trudged through a lot of heavy theology, however, we needed to introduce the covenant since we’ll be assuming it and referring to it in everything else that follows. Next we’ll be looking at some definitions and summaries of the covenant to help us solidify our understanding.

# Definitions of Covenant

* “… the fundamental image behind each of the applications of [the word covenant in the Bible] is the use of familial categories for those who are not bound by ties of natural kinship.’ Thus, by a ceremony or (quasi-) legal process, people who are not kin are now bound as tightly as any family relationship. Marriage is the best example of this. A man and woman, who are not previously related, are now bound closer than any other bond of blood or kinship.”   
   -- Gentry & Wellum.
* “A covenant is an enduring agreement which defines a relationship between two parties involving a solemn, binding obligation specified on the part of at least one of the parties toward the other, made by oath under threat of divine curse, and ratified by a visual ritual.”  
  -- Gentry & Wellum.
* “… the covenant is a personal-structural bond which joins the three persons of God in a community of life, and in which man was created to participate.” -- J. Jordan
* “The covenant, then, must be defined as a bond of love in which the parties of the covenant solemnly swear to devote themselves to seek the blessing of the other party. Among the persons of the Trinity, the covenant is the formal expression of the mutual commitment of love between Father, Son, and Spirit. In God's relationship with man, the covenant is the formal promise of God's love and grace to man. As we have observed before, this kind of relationship in the nature of the case demands reciprocation. Obedience to God's commandments is the covenantal expression of a creature's love to the Creator. Never in the Bible, whether in the books of Moses or in the New Testament, does the covenant imply a contractual sort of legalism.” -- Ralph A. Smith

By listing several definitions of the biblical covenant hopefully you heard the different parts we discussed earlier.

# Covenant Applicable to Families?

We now need to determine if the covenant really is applicable to families. Let’s look at the evidence for this by considering the following:

* “The ability to call down and carry out God’s judgment and sanctions (blessings and curses) is what makes an institution covenantal. The only examples given in the Bible that have such authority to invoke God’s judgments are the family, church, and state (civil government). All answer to God Himself. They are bound in a legal bond or covenant that is ratified in an oath to Him.”  
   - John G. Crawford.
* Malachi 2:14: “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion, and your wife by covenant.”
* Proverbs 2:17: “… Who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.
* “for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.”

“Leaving (‘*azav*) implies the termination of a covenant bond, the same Hebrew word being used of apostasy from the covenant. … The covenant being ended is the parental bond. A new covenant or bond is formed by ‘cleaving’ (*dabaq*). The parental relationship is temporary and the marital covenant is permanent.” -- Ray Sutton

# The Context of Mission is the Covenant

The final thing we need to emphasize is the link between covenant and dominion. The following two quotes make this point clear:

“Man is the divine image. As servant king and son of God mankind will mediate God’s rule to the creation in the context of a covenant relationship with God on the one hand and the earth on the other. Hence the concept of the kingdom of God is found on the first page of Scripture. Indeed, the theme is kingdom through covenant.

… Genesis 12 presents a political structure brought into being by the word of God, with God at the center and God as the governmental head and rule of that community. In other words, we have the kingdom of God brought into being by means of the covenant (i.e., the covenant between God and Abraham). Hence, we have kingdom through covenant.”

Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum in Kingdom Through Covenant

“After we have assessed the covenant, we need to ask, ‘How does it work?’ It is my thesis that covenant is the mechanism for dominion and success. After all, Moses says, ‘Keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do’ (Deut. 29:9). If we really believe the Bible, then covenant is the key to daily living at every level. …

…“Some Christians do not understand their Commission from the Lord. It is a renewal of the cultural mandate; it has the covenantal structure; it means Christians are to take dominion by means of the covenant.” That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant; by Ray Sutton