

Family Issues

Teacher's Manual

Family Issues

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Lesson 1

The First Family

I. Why is it so important to place an emphasis on marriage and the family?

- A. Because the family is and always will be the basic building block of society. If the family collapses, society collapses.
- B. Because God places a high value on the family. We want to value what God values. God is into this thing called “family.” He designed it, created it and wants to use it for His glory.
- C. Because as the family goes, so goes the church. The church is God’s instrument in the earth to fulfill His eternal purpose. The church is made up of people and families. If the families are not powerful, the church will not be powerful.
- D. Because the modern world is trying to redefine the family.

The traditional concept of family that corresponds to the biblical concept of family is “the group comprising a husband and wife and their dependent children, constituting a fundamental unit in the organization of society.” It is this definition that is under attack in today’s world.

The following quotes are from U.S. News and World Report, May 9, 1983 (nearly 25 years ago) defining what the family will look like in 2033.

“On a spring afternoon, half a century from today, the Joneses are gathering to sing ‘Happy Birthday’ to Junior. There’s Dad and his third wife, Mom and her second husband, Junior’s two half brothers from his father’s first marriage, his six step sisters from his mother’s spouses previous unions, 100 year old Great-Grandpa, all of Junior’s current ‘Grandparents,’ assorted aunts, uncles-in-laws and step-cousins. While one robot scoops up the gift wrapping and another blows out the candles, Junior makes a wish...that he didn’t have so many relatives.”

The article goes on to say that...

“Relationships then will be in a confusing tangle as a result of people living longer and changing mates to suit the seasons of their life. Serial marriages, a growing trend even now, will be a normal and planned-for part of adulthood. Tomorrow’s children will grow up with several sets of parents and an assortment of half and step siblings.”

“Over the next five decades, experts say, society will redefine its concept of the family. Through the pattern of divorce and remarriage, a whole network of kinship will arise. There will be double sets of grandparents, aunts, uncles and brothers and sisters, as well as former in-laws and ex-spouses—all of them making up the new divorce-extended family.”

“Although these family networks will be larger, ‘natural families’ will be smaller as couples decide to have fewer children—or, no children at all...Beyond the traditional unit of Mom, Pop and the kids, sociologists see a growth of nonfamily-type households—group marriages, gay parents, unmarried couples, communes of close friends, and a growing number of single parents.”

E. Because cultural forces (inspired by the devil) are undermining the success of the family.

1. The busyness of our lifestyles
2. The focus on materialism (things are more important than relationships)
3. The excessive divorce rate
4. The proliferation of electronic entertainment (a high-tech/low-touch society)
5. The dual income culture
6. The TV model of family
7. The educational system and its lack of absolutes
8. The culture of comfort that wants everything the easy way
9. The overall selfishness of the individual
10. The “rights” movements that empower children (children feel that the family should be run by “democracy”)
11. The debt society (indebtedness makes us slaves to the debt)
12. The context of the last days (II Tim. 3:1-5).

You should also know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. You must stay away from people like that. –NLT

II. What is the foundation for the first family?

The foundation for the first family is God Himself (Eph. 3:14-15).

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named...

A. The pattern for the first family is found in the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1. The Father reveals the nature of true fatherhood (Deut. 32:6; Ps. 68:4-6; 103:13; Pro. 3:12; Is. 64:8; Mal. 2:10; I Cor. 1:3).

But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand. Isaiah 64:8

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 1:3

2. The Son reveals the nature of true sonship (Ps. 2:7; Is. 7:14; 9:6; Mt. 3:17; John 1:14, 18; 3:16; 17:1-7).

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

3. The Holy Spirit reveals the “feminine” side of God.

While all of the persons of the Godhead are always referred to in the masculine gender, there is no question that the Holy Spirit bears many of the attributes of motherhood.

- a. The Holy Spirit brooded over the face of the earth much like a mother hen would brood over her chicks (Gen. 1:2).

The earth was without form and an empty waste, and darkness was upon the face of the very great deep. The Spirit of God was moving (hovering, brooding) over the face of the waters. –AMP

- b. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter much like the mother who comforts her young (Is. 66:12-13; John 16:7).

I will comfort you there as a child is comforted by its mother. Isaiah 66:13

- c. The Holy Spirit is the gentle, dove-like member of the Godhead (Mt. 3:16, Compare Song 6:9).
- d. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives birth to spiritual young (John 3:5, 6, 8).
- e. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

- B. The vision for an extended family was found in the heart of the Father (Gen. 1:26-28). The first time that the Bible says that “it is not good for a man to be alone,” it was God talking to Adam (Gen. 2:18). God had a desire for extended relationship.

1. God desired offspring in His image.
2. God desired His offspring to reproduce to fill up the earth.
3. God desired that His offspring would reach a place of maturity to reflect His character and nature.
4. God desired to have an intimate relationship and communion with His offspring.

5. God desired that His offspring would enter into a God-like function of ruling and reigning.
6. God desired that His offspring would eventually qualify as a bride for the Eternal Son of God.

III. What did the first family on earth look like?

- A. God began by creating the man (Gen. 2:7-8; I Tim. 2:13). Along with that, God created a desire in man for the woman.

For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. I Timothy 2:13

- B. God created the woman from the man (Gen. 2:20-23; I Cor. 11:9). The Hebrew word for woman literally means “from man.”

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Genesis 2:21-23

For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. I Corinthians 11:8-9

- C. Man and woman cooperating together brought forth offspring (Gen. 1:28; 4:1-2).

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.” Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. Genesis 4:1-2

- D. God placed man in an ideal environment (Gen. 2:8-15).
- E. Man was innocent but unproven regarding sin (Gen. 2:25).

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

IV. What was the purpose for which the first family was created?

The primary purpose for the first family was to satisfy the heart of God for offspring in His image. The key to the purpose for which the first family was created goes back to God’s original vision.

- A. The first family was to be a reflection of the image and character of God.
- B. The first family was to be a source of fellowship and relationship for God.
- C. The first family was to be fruitful and fill the earth with godly offspring.
- D. The first family was to exercise dominion over the earth to prepare for future ruling beyond the earth.
- E. The first family was to eventually be positioned to become a bride for the only begotten Son of God.

V. What is a good biblical definition of the family?

Definition of Family:

The family is the God-ordained basic unit of society having parental headship and discipline which is established for the purpose of enjoying common life together through working, caring, sharing, serving and ministering to God and others.

Lesson 2

The Restoration of the Home

I. What happened to the first family?

A. Mankind fell into sin.

When mankind disobeyed the clear command of God and fell into sin, six things happened.

1. Man became a sinner separating him from a holy God (Ps. 51:5).
2. Man's mind became defiled (Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 1:21; Tit. 1:15).
3. Man became a slave to sin (Rom. 6:17).
4. Man became an enemy of God (Jam. 4:4).
5. Man became dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-2).
6. Man started on a course to eternal damnation (II Th. 1:6-10).

B. Mankind fell and lost touch with the divine purpose for the family.

1. The first family lost the image and character of God.
2. The first family became separated from fellowship and relationship with God.
3. The first family passed on their sinful nature to their offspring.
4. The first family conceded their dominion over the earth and became slaves to sin.

II. What effect did sin have on family life?

Sin precipitated a wide range of family problems which were not experienced from the beginning. Note all of these examples are taken from Genesis, the Book of Beginnings.

A. Sin introduced disrespect for and rebellion against parental authority.

1. Ham showed disrespect toward his father Noah by mocking him and not covering him with a garment (Gen. 9:20-27).
2. Rachel rebelled against her father Laban by stealing the household idols and then lying about it (Gen. 31:19).
3. Reuben insulted God and his father by having sexual relations with his father's concubines (Gen. 35:22).

B. Sin introduced hatred and envy among family members.

1. Cain killed Abel because he was jealous of God's acceptance of Abel's offering (Gen. 4:1-8).
 2. Esau bore a grudge against his brother for tricking him out of his birthright (Gen. 25:29-34; 27:41).
 3. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him because of his dreams and because of the favor of their father toward him (Gen. 37:11).
- C. Sin introduced improper and unprincipled relationships in marriage.
1. Lamech committed polygamy by taking both Adah and Zillah as his wives (Gen. 4:19).
 2. Lot drank himself drunk and committed incest with his daughters (Gen. 19:30-38).
- D. Sin introduced self-centeredness and dishonesty in marriage.
1. Abraham lied about his wife being his sister in order to protect himself while putting his wife at risk (Gen. 12:10-20).
 2. Isaac did the same thing (Gen. 26:7-16). Like father, like son.
- E. Sin introduced a lack of respect and love for children on the part of parents and relative.
1. Lot offered his two virgin daughters to wicked men (Gen. 19:8).
 2. Laban tricked Jacob by giving him the wrong daughter in marriage (Gen. 29:18-30).
- F. Sin introduced deception into the marital relationship.
- Rebekah disguised her favorite son, Jacob, to look like Esau so that he could receive the blessing (Gen. 27:5-17).
- G. Sin introduced favoritism in the parenting process.
1. Isaac favored Esau while Rachel favored Jacob which resulted in hatred between the boys and their eventual offspring for generations to come (Gen. 25:28).
 2. Jacob favored Joseph over the other sons because he was a son of his old age and a son of his favorite wife (Gen. 37:3).
- H. Sin introduced unfaithfulness between spouses.
- Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph into an adulterous relationship (Gen. 39:7).

The family which began as God's vehicle for the development of relationship, character, ministry, and fruitfulness in man, was rendered ineffective by the introduction of sin.

III. What is God's solution for the fallen condition of the family?

A. God is very interested in the restoration of the home (Jer.31:1; Mal. 4:5-6).

"At the same time," says the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people." Jeremiah 31:1

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers... Malachi 4:5-6

1. He is interested because He has not forgotten His original purpose.
2. He is interested because the family is the basic building block of the Church.
3. He is interested because marriage and the family are a type of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33).

B. God's solution for man's problem is Calvary, the place where Jesus died for the sins of all people.

Through the cross, God does not merely restore the spirit of man, but His restoration touches every area of man's life, including the family.

1. The household of Cornelius was restored through life in Jesus Christ (Acts 10:1-2; 44-48).
2. The household of Lydia was restored through life in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:14-15).
3. The household of the Philippian jailor was restored through life in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:25-34).

*Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. 26 Suddenly, there was a great earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! 27 The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. 28 But Paul shouted to him, "Don't do it! We are all here!" 29 Trembling with fear, the jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down before Paul and Silas. 30 He brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with **your entire household.**" 32 Then they shared the word of the Lord with him and all who lived in his household. 33 That same hour the jailer washed their wounds, and he and*

everyone in his household were immediately baptized. 34 Then he brought them into his house and set a meal before them. He and **his entire household** rejoiced because **they all believed in God**. –NLT

- C. Man is responsible to take full advantage of God's answer.
1. Men and women must first come into right relationship with God.
 - a. This means repenting of their sins against God and against other family members.
 - b. This means receiving Christ as the Lord of their lives and their family life.
 2. Men and women must be willing to find out what God has to say about family life.
 - a. This means searching the Scriptures for the truth about their God-ordained roles in the family.
 - b. This means seeking the counsel of those who are aware of God's guidelines for the family.
 3. Men and women must trust God's word over the words of man.

God has a pattern for what the family should be.

- a. Men often have their ideas about how the family relationships should be.
- b. Women have their ideas as well.
- c. Children have an altogether different idea from the parents.
- d. Society has its ideas of how the family should work.

God will only bless His pattern for the family.

4. Men and women must put the word of God into practice.
5. Men and women must desire and actively solicit the help of God in the fulfilling of their God-ordained roles and responsibilities.

Note: Some of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

Lesson 3

The Covenant of Marriage

If the family is the foundation for society, then marriage is the foundation for the family. As the marriage goes, so goes the family. The best thing that parents can do for their children is to have a God-pleasing marriage relationship. For this reason we are starting with the subject of marriage as we explore family issues from a biblical perspective.

I. What is Marriage?

A. Marriage is like...

- PRAYER, no one ever perfects it, there is always room for improvement.
- A SAVINGS ACCOUNT, you can only get out of it what you put into it.
- PADDLING A CANOE, it looks easy until you try it.
- HORSERADISH, men praise it with tears in their eyes.
- A CLASSIC BRITISH SPORTS CAR, it takes constant care and regular maintenance.
- CREDIT BUYING, you commit first, you pay for it later.
- A RETIREMENT ACCOUNT, it can only be enjoyed in old age if you have put in the regular lifelong deposits.
- FINE SILVER SERVICE, it will tarnish if not regularly polished.
- A VENDING MACHINE, it takes personal change to get something special out of it.
- WINE OR CHEESE, it gets better with age or it turns to vinegar and molds depending on how it is cared for.

B. Marriage is the coming together of a man and a woman for the purpose of establishing a new home for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose (Gen. 2:24).

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

1. This process involves a leaving of father and mother.
 - a. Leaving father and mother has nothing to do with severing relationship with one's parents or moving great distances from them.

- b. Leaving father and mother involves making this new marriage relationship the priority relationship of one's life.
 - 2. This process involves a cleaving of one to the other.
 - a. Cleaving to one another means that this new relationship is based on a lifelong commitment.
 - b. Cleaving to one another means that this new relationship is based on an understanding that the commitment level will be tested.

“For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health.”
 - c. Cleaving to one another means that we are committing ourselves to one marriage partner for life whatever happens (not unless our problems get too great).
- C. Marriage is a lifelong partnership built on a commitment to meet each other's needs and to fulfill God's purpose for our lives together.

II. Marriage is a Covenant (Mal. 2:14-16; Pro. 2:16-18).

You cry out, “Why has the LORD abandoned us?” I’ll tell you why! Because the LORD witnessed the vows you and your wife made to each other on your wedding day when you were young. But you have been disloyal to her, though she remained your faithful companion, the wife of your marriage vows. Didn’t the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard yourself; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. “For I hate divorce!” says the LORD, the God of Israel. “It is as cruel as putting on a victim’s bloodstained coat,” says the LORD Almighty. “So guard yourself; always remain loyal to your wife.” Malachi 2:14-15, NLT

Wisdom will save you from the immoral woman, from the flattery of the adulterous woman. She has abandoned her husband and ignores the covenant she made before God. Entering her house leads to death; it is the road to hell. Proverbs 2:16-18, NLT

- A. A covenant is a formal, solemn and binding agreement or contract, usually under seal, between two (or more) parties.
 - 1. The word “covenant” in the Hebrew actually comes from a word meaning “bond” or “fetter” (Ezek. 20:37).
 - 2. It literally means to bind two people together—the two become one.
- B. We are living in an age where people do not fulfill their covenant commitments (II Tim. 3:4, truce-breakers).
 - 1. People want out of leases and rental agreements.

2. People want relationships that cost them nothing.
3. People want a way out of their marriage commitment (e.g. pre-nuptial agreements).

C. God Himself has entered into many covenants with man.

1. Examples include covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David.
2. All of God's covenants have five common elements that parallel the marriage covenant.

God's Covenants	Marriage Covenants	Description of Elements of Covenants
Promises	Vows	This is where commitments are made that form the basis of the covenant.
Sacrifice	Death to Self	A symbolic death must take place to ratify the covenant between parties.
Seal or Sign	The Ring	An enduring seal is used to reflect the enduring nature of the covenant.
Feast	Feasting	A time of rejoicing to celebrate the new relationship that is formed.
Sanctuary	The Home	A place of relationship where the promises of the covenant are fulfilled.

III. God has provided the pattern for entering into all covenant relationships.

Most married couples started out wrong in establishing that initial relationship. Most of the time this has been due to an ignorance of God pattern of entering into covenant relationship (Hos. 4:6).

A. God's approach (I Th. 5:23):

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When God enters into covenant relationship with man, He has an approach that produces life.

God's Order: Spirit → Soul → Body

1. God begins His relationship with man by inhabiting the spirit of man (I Cor. 6:17).

But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

2. God proceeds from the spirit of man to sanctify the soul of man (Rom. 12:1-2).
3. God's salvation will eventually involve the redemption of the body of man (Rom. 8:23; I Cor. 15:42-44).

B. Satan's approach:

When Satan enters into covenant relationship with man, He has an approach that produces death.

Satan's Order: Body → Soul → Spirit

1. Satan begins his relationship with man by tempting him in the physical or sense realm.
2. Satan desires to establish strongholds in the mind of people.
3. Ultimately he desires to inhabit or possess the spirit of man.

C. God wants us to build and establish marital relationships according to His pattern.

1. This means that we start with a union of our spirit.
2. Then we move to a unity in our soul realm of mind, will and emotions.
3. Finally we become one flesh in marriage.

D. Covenant partners must first of all be one in the spirit.

1. This eliminates the idea of Christians marrying the unsaved.
2. Before husband and wife are anything else, they are brothers and sisters in Christ.

IV. Relationships that do not follow God's covenant pattern face problems.

Many married couples did not follow God's plan through their courtship and for that reason some of them are experiencing problems. When our relationship is based on physical attraction, there are some negative things that can occur as times goes on.

- A. The relationship will decline as physical beauty declines. Why do people work so hard to retain beauty?
- B. The couple will experience a low level of communication. Often the couple never learned to talk in their courtship days and now they do not know how to dialogue in their marriage.
- C. The relationship will be open to more serious moral attack. If love and marriage are about physical attraction, then someone will always look better. In this

marriage the key to staying “in love” has to do with sex appeal and sexual gratification.

- D. It will hinder the development of true spiritual union. It will cause a misplaced focus. Their marriage will have to be enriched by new sexual experimentation instead of deep spiritual intimacy.

V. The Solution to the problem is to repent and do what should have been done at the first.

This means that as husbands and wives we must cultivate a “brother/sister” relationship in the Lord. We need to put a new foundation under our house.

A relationship that is based on covenant love will take seriously all of God’s admonitions regarding brother and sister relationships. There are many Bible admonitions that relate to our relationship to fellow believers. We owe all of these things to every believer, but we especially owe them to our spouse as an heir together of the grace of life (I Pet. 3:7).

- A. We must maintain peace between each other (Jam. 5:9; 4:11; Rom. 14:23).

James 5:9

Do not grumble against one another, brethren...

Do not complain...against one another... Amp.

Do not make complaints...Living

Don’t grumble about each other...NLT

Say not hard things... BAS

Grudge not one against another...KJV

Don’t blame your troubles on one another... Beck

Stop muttering against one another... Williams

The Greek word used here means “to groan or sigh with grief.”

James 4:11

Don’t speak evil against each other, my dear brothers and sisters. –NLT

How do you talk about your spouse behind their back in the presence of others?

Romans 14:13

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore...

So let us stop criticizing one another... Moffatt

- B. We must always seek the best interest of the other (Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3). The truth is that most dating relationships are self-centered.

Romans 12:10

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another...

Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. –NLT

Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. –RSVA

Philippians 2:3

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Practice treating one another as your superiors. –Williams

Let each one of you regard one another as more important than himself.
–NASB

Say to your spouse, “You are more important than I am.” Do you really treat your spouse that way or do you expect them to wait on your every need?

Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.

Philippians 2:3-4, NLT

- C. We must look for ways of serving each other.

1. As brothers and sisters in Christ we are to serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13c).

...through love serve one another.

- a. Often it is easy for men to do chores for other women and not for his own family.
 - b. Or women can bake special things for everyone else other than their family.
2. As brothers and sisters in Christ we are to clothe ourselves with the apron of humility (I Pet. 5:5b).

Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility...

Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility and serve one another. –ASV

Indeed, you must all put on the apron of humility to serve one another.

–Moffatt

- D. We must always seek to strengthen one another (Rom. 14:19). The word “strengthen” means “to edify or build up.”

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

- E. In addition, we should:

1. Bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2).
2. Exhort one another (Heb. 10:21).
3. Provoke one another to do good works (Heb. 10:24).
4. Comfort one another (I Th. 4:18).
5. Pray for one another (Jam. 5:16).
6. Submit one to another (Eph. 5:21).
7. Use hospitality one to another (I Pet. 4:9).

All of these things are the basic minimum that is required of us as covenant brothers and sisters in Christ.

Many times we treat all other Christians with more love and respect than we do our spouse. God wants to change all of that.

We must remember that whatever we do to our spouse we are in effect doing to Christ.

The prerequisite for covenant relationship must be a spiritual union.

Now may the God Who gives the power of patient endurance (steadfastness) and Who supplies encouragement, grant you to live in such mutual harmony and such full sympathy with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may [unanimously] with united hearts and one voice, praise and glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah). Romans 15:5-6, Amp.

Lesson 4

Role Relationships in Marriage

When it comes to role relationships in marriage, it is critical for us to understand that while we may have many opinions on this subject, God also has an opinion. In modern society there is a movement to virtually remove all distinctions between the sexes. However, if we are going to fully understand God's plan for the family, the church and His eternal purpose, we have to be willing to acknowledge that there is a difference between maleness and femaleness.

What is the difference between man and woman, male and female from God's perspective? Why did God create the sexes? How is the role of a man different to that of a woman in the marriage relationship? What happens when these roles are reversed? What kind of sex role awareness is needed if we are going to be restored to God's original plan?

Before we get to that, it is good for us to look at how and why God made man and woman the way that He did.

I. What are some of the factors that will be present in the latter days that will resist God's view of male and female roles?

In II Timothy 3:1-5 Paul gives us a preview of the context of the last days. This is the context in which we live in ever increasing measure. Many of these characteristics or traits in the human experience have contributed to a competition between the sexes even to the point of role reversals.

- A. The climate of the last days will be dominated by self-centeredness, the first and all inclusive trait on Paul's list (II Tim. 3:1-5). People are going to be:
1. Lovers of their own selves – There will be a people who have a supreme regard for their own interests and activities with a total disregard for the rights and comforts of others.
 2. Covetous – There will be those who make the pursuit of wealth and materialism their main goal in life.
 3. Boasters – There will be people who go to great extremes to make you believe that they are something other than what they really are.
 4. Proud – There will be people who enjoy demeaning and putting others down so that they might appear to be above them.
 5. Blasphemers – There will be people who love to hurl insults and cutting remarks concerning God, His nature and character and toward other people who are made in the image of God.
 6. Disobedient to parents – There will be people who have little or no respect for God-ordained authorities in their life.

7. Unthankful – There will be those who have absolutely no gratitude for anything that they have been so freely given by God and others.
8. Unholy – There will be those who refuse to recognize even the ultimate decencies of life and seek to derive pleasure through shameful means.
9. Without Natural Affection – There will be those who reject the normal kind of family love and affection that should exist between a husband and a wife, parents and children.
10. Truce breakers – There will be those who refuse to enter into any kind of long term agreement that may require service, sacrifice and commitment on their part.
11. False accusers – There will be those who have so aligned themselves with Satan's sin that they themselves begin to manifest his traits of antagonism toward the purposes of God.
12. Incontinent – There will be those who have given place to selfish pursuits to such an extent that they lose all self-control, restraint and power over carnal desires.
13. Fierce – There will be those who take on an animal-like savagery that lacks any trace of human sympathy in the pursuit of their personal aims.
14. Despisers of those that are good – There will be those that are literally hostile to virtue and to anyone who becomes a mouthpiece of righteousness.
15. Traitors – There will be those who make friends for selfish ends only to turn and betray them when their usefulness has ended.
16. High-minded – There will be those so inflated with self-conceit that anyone of a different opinion is looked upon as a fool.
17. Heady – There will be those who move, as it were, intentionally down a wrong path with no regard for the consequences.
18. Lovers of pleasures – There will be those who are ruled by their senses and animal appetites who become consumed with vain amusements and sensual gratification.
19. Externally religious – There will be those who have learned to go through all of the Sunday, religious ritual expected of them by society without having to deal with their need for personal repentance and change.
20. Inwardly empty – There will be those who live a lie, who hold up an external form but never really experience the life and power that comes with a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and a conforming of one's life to the ways of God.

B. The fruit of self-centeredness in our society is obvious. It includes:

1. Rebellion against God-ordained leadership and headship.

“No one tells me what to do!”

- a. This includes men rebelling against God.
- b. This includes wives rebelling against their husbands.
- c. This includes children rebelling against their parents.
- d. This includes servants rebelling against their masters.

2. Materialism and the pursuit of wealth.

“Get all you can while you can!”

Men for years have made this their main goal; it is only natural for women and children to follow their example.

3. Love for personal pleasure.

“Eat, drink and be merry!”

4. The “me” generation. It’s all about me.

5. Competition between the sexes and a confusion of roles.

God’s prescribed family arrangement can never work as long as everyone in the family is living for themselves. Unless every member of the family has a servant’s heart and is seeking the best interest of the other family members, the family is doomed to fail as it has in other cultures.

II. How did God establish role relationships in the beginning?

God had a master plan which involved the establishment of the first family. God’s plan consisted of several things.

- A. Man *and* woman were created to reflect the true image of God (Gen. 1:26-28; 5:1). The image of God is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1. God’s image involves maleness and femaleness.
2. In the Godhead we have a perfect blending of male and female characteristics.
 - a. The Father God has characteristics of love, concern, provision, protection, authority, strength.
 - b. Jesus Christ the Son patterns dependence, submission and obedience to the Father.

c. The Holy Spirit has characteristics of comfort, fruitfulness, nourishing and sustaining.

B. Man and woman were created by God of like substance to fulfill a common goal and destiny (Gen. 2:21, 24; I Cor. 11:11-12).

They are mutually dependent upon each other. Neither the man nor the woman had the ability to fulfill their God-ordained destiny without the other.

C. Man and woman were created by God to be perfectly suited to each other (Gen. 2:18-20).

Woman was to be man's perfect complement. Neither one of them is complete without the other. The one makes up for what is lacking in the other (Movie Line: "You complete me.")

And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

But still there was no companion suitable for him. –NLT

But for Adam there was not found a helper meet (suitable, adapted, complementary) for him. –AMP

D. From the beginning there was perfect unity and harmony without the need for role clarification (Gen. 2:22-23).

Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

They lived as equals with a common charge under God's control. When God presented Eve to Adam there did not appear to be a great need for role clarification. At this stage there was no mention of headship or submission.

III. What effect did man's fall into sin have on role relationships?

A. Sin introduced self-will and pride into the marriage relationship that necessitated a clear definition of roles (Gen. 3:16-17).

God established an order after sin that would help preserve the race of mankind until redemption could be completed. God clearly defined the roles of man and woman in marriage after the fall of man.

To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life."

Then he said to the woman, "You will bear children with intense pain and suffering. And though your desire will be for your husband, he will be your master." –NLT

B. Man was placed as the head of their relationship.

1. Not because:

- Man was superior to woman (they are equal in value, different in function).
- Man was more intelligent than woman.
- Man was more important than woman.

2. But because:

- Man was created first (Gen. 2:18; I Tim. 2:13; I Cor. 11:8-9).
- Woman sinned first (Gen. 3:1-6; I Tim. 2:14).
- Man was physically created to be a protector.
- The male and female relationship was to reflect God's plan for Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32).

God was interested in establishing a model that would be prophetic of an eternal relationship between Christ and the Church.

C. God's role arrangement was designed as temporary until the process of redemption was complete (Mt. 22:30).

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.

In the resurrection there will be no such role distinctions. We will be like the angels of God, neither marrying nor being given in marriage. Male and female will be under the direct headship of God.

D. Ultimately in God's plan the feminine gender will predominate the nature of mankind as the church becomes Christ's bride (Eph. 5:26-27; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2).

At this time the function of gender distinction will no longer exist and all believers, both male and female will rule with Christ over the universe and over the angels (I Cor. 6:2-3).

IV. What are the distinctions between men and women that help us to understand their role distinctions?

There are many differences between men and women besides the obvious. Some of them include the following:

A. There are physical differences. Women are physically designed to nurture, while men are physically designed to protect.

1. Their metabolism is different. The woman's is slower than man's.
2. Their skeletal structure is different.
3. Their internal organs are different. In addition to the obvious, women have larger kidneys, liver, stomach and appendix, but smaller lungs (bladder?).
4. Their blood content is different. Women contain 20% fewer red blood cells which in effect makes her more prone to fainting.
5. Their brute strength factor is different.
6. Their heart beat is different. Women's hearts beat faster by an average of 8 beats per minute.
7. Their lung capacity is different.

“Refusal to face the differences between men and women borders in intellectual insanity.” --Tim LaHaye

B. There are sexual differences

1. Their sex drive is different. A woman's tends to be related to her menstrual cycle while man's tends to be constant.
2. They are aroused differently. Women tend to be aroused by touch while men are aroused by sight.
3. A woman perceives sex as what has gone on all day, while a man sees sex as what happens in the bedroom.
4. Women respond slowly sexually, while men tend to respond quickly.

C. There are psychological differences.

1. Women tend to be more intuitive or sensitive, while men tend to be more interested in logic.
2. Women tend to be more personal and feeling oriented, while men tend to be more detached and objective.
3. Women tend to be more interested in details, while men tend to only want generalities.

4. Women tend to want to enjoy life on the road, while men tend to turn everything into a challenge (How many miles can we make today? As opposed to being able to stop, drink coffee and smell the flowers.).
5. Women tend to define themselves through relationships, while men tend to define themselves through their work.

V. What is the role of the man in the marriage relationship?

The male figure has been appointed by God *to serve* by being:

- A. Submitted to Christ (I Cor. 11:1-3).
- B. The Spiritual Leader (I Cor. 11:3). The evidence that you are a spiritual leader is that you have:
 5. A desire to seek the Lord (your head).

This is seen when you read the word, are faithful in prayer, are regular in church attendance, demonstrate a love for God's house, read Christian materials and fellowship with other sincere Christians.
 6. Convictions based on Scripture.
 7. Determination to live according to those convictions.
 8. A demonstration of God's love in your leadership.
- C. The Protector (Eph. 5:23).
- D. The Principle Provider (I Tim. 5:8; Gen. 3:17-19).

The man was given the responsibility to deal with the thorns and thistles and to work by the sweat of his brow to provide food for his family. The man was to lay his life (and his paycheck) down for those of his household.

VI. What is the role of the woman in the marriage relationship?

The female figure has been appointed by God *to serve* by:

- A. Flowing with her husband (Eph. 5:22-24).
- B. Managing the affairs of the home under her husband (Pro. 31).
- C. Giving herself to her children (Gen. 3:16).
- D. Respecting her husband (Eph. 5:33). This involves giving honor to her husband and, in so doing, releasing him to fulfill his responsibilities.

When you read about the woman in Proverbs 31, she had a major involvement in the management of the affairs of the home.

In our society today we are being taught that you cannot be a housewife and be fulfilled. Even school textbooks have eliminated any pictures of women with aprons in favor of men doing housework. Women are pictured as mechanics, telephone repair people and policemen. I do believe that men should be involved with housework and I do believe that it is perfectly fine for women to hold down any job for which they are qualified. I am opposed to demeaning the role of the stay-at-home mom as if she has accepted a lesser calling in life.

VII. What is everyone's role in the marriage relationship?

Serving!

The role of both the man and the woman involves:

- Loving one another (Rom. 12:10).
- Seeking the best interest of the other (Phil. 2:3).
- Serving each other (Gal. 5:13).
- Being subject one to another (I Pet. 5:5).
- Comforting one another (I Th. 4:18).
- Praying one for another (Jam. 5:16).
- Bearing one another's burdens (Gal 6:2).

Lesson 5

Loving as Christ Loved

I. How does the Bible compare the relationships in marriage to that of Christ and the Church?

The key passage in the Bible that speaks of this relationship is found in Ephesians 5:22-33.

You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of his body, the church; he gave his life to be her Savior. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything. 25 And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word. 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. 28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife. 29 No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church. 30 And we are his body. 31 As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. 33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. –NLT

The following chart will help us to see some of the primary challenges of these verses:

Christ/Husbands	Church/Wives
Head to Wife	Submits to Husband
Gives Life for Wife	
Loves Wife	
Cares for the Wife	
Beautifies Wife	

This chart makes it obvious that the primary responsibility for making the marriage work properly is on the husband.

II. What is the greatest challenge given to husbands and wives in this analogy?

A. The greatest challenge given to husbands is to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19).

1. The husband is to give his life for his wife (vs. 23, 25).
2. The husband is to love his wife with the same love Christ demonstrated for the church (vs. 25).
3. The husband is to love his wife as he does his own body (vs. 28-29).
4. The husband is to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife (vs. 31).

Leadership like this is easy to follow.

- B. The greatest challenge given to women is to respond to their husbands as they would respond to Christ and to submit to their husbands as the Church submits to Christ (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; I Pet. 3:1). In other words she is to cooperate with her husband and make it easy for him to lead.

Cooperative followers are easy to lead.

III. How has Christ demonstrated His love for the Church?

Ask Class: What are some of the words that you would use to describe God's love for us or Christ's love for the church?

Christ's love is:

A. An Unconditional Love (Rom. 5:6b-8)

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him. –Message

1. Christ's love was not earned or deserved by anything that we did or could potentially do for Him.
2. Christ's love was demonstrated by dying so that we could live.
3. Christ's love was unconditional in the sense that there were no strings attached. He had no "ifs" attached to His gift of love (i.e. "I will do this...if you will do that.).

B. A Volitional Love (Deut. 7:7-8)

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

1. It was an act of His will. He chose to set His love on us. It was calculated and deliberate.
2. It was not a decision based on His emotions.
3. It was not based on what we could do for Him. There was nothing about our beauty, our strength, our potential contribution to Him that made Him want us.
4. It was based on promises made and covenants given in the past.

C. An Intense Love (Eph. 5:1-2, 25)

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Ephesians 5:1-2

1. An intense love is a love that gives itself and puts forth a strong effort. The truth is that you get out of a relationship what you put into the relationship.
2. An intense love is ardent, strained, exerted to a high degree, unremitting, excessive, fervent, very deep and very strong.
3. An intense love means seizing every opportunity to express that love. This is not something that you make a side issue. It is a primary focus.

An avid fisherman seizes every opportunity to slip away and fish. He often spares no expense to have the best equipment for what he is so passionate about.

D. An Unending Love (Rom. 8:38-39; Jer. 31:3; Heb. 13:5; Deut. 31:8)

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

What situation would there be that could separate you from the love of your spouse?

The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." Jeremiah 31:3

For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

And the LORD, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed. Deuteronomy 31:8

Does your spouse know this about you? Have you ever threatened your spouse with abandonment? Have you ever used the “D” word in a time of argument?

1. This love is “until death do us part.”
2. This love is “in sickness and in health” or in good times or bad times.
3. This love is everlasting.
4. This love is not able to move to a place of separation.

Does your spouse know this? Do you re-assure her often?

E. An Unselfish Love (Phil. 2:1-7)

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose. 3 Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. 4 Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing. 5 Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. 6 Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. 7 He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. 8 And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. –NLT

1. This kind of love puts the other person's desires and interests ahead of itself.
 - a. It says, “YOU are more important than I.”
 - b. It says, “In am interested in what YOU are interested in.”
 - c. It says, “I am here to serve YOU.”
2. This kind of love does not cling to its own rights. A slave has no rights.
3. This kind of love expects nothing in return; it has only the expectation of service.

Why did you get married? Was it to serve or be served?

4. This kind of love requires taking the humble position (humbling ourselves).
5. This kind of love means dying daily.

F. A Purposeful Love (Eph. 5:25-27)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

1. Christ's love works for our improvement. He has a vision of what we can be. He found us one way, but He is going to love us into a "glorious condition."
2. Our love should work for the improvement of our spouse.
 - a. Does your wife sense this from you? That you are seeking her enrichment?
 - b. Is her life going to be better because you have touched it?
 - c. Are you the one who helps or hinders her from reaching her full potential in God?

G. A Sacrificial Love (Gal. 2:20)

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

1. Christ's love laid it all down for us even to the point of death. Are you willing to die for the sake of your marriage?
2. Christ's love girded itself with a towel and served us.
3. Christ's love demonstrated leadership by providing a model of self-sacrifice. Being a leader in the relationship means that you are the family's biggest servant.

H. A Manifested Love

Christ demonstrates or shows us His love by specific actions toward us. He does not just tell us He loves us. His love is clearly seen by what He does.

- He protects us.
- He intercedes for us.
- He guards us.
- He guides us.
- He strengthens us.
- He helps us.
- He defends us.
- He teaches us.
- He comforts us.
- He equips us.
- He empathizes with us.
- He provides for all of our needs.

(See: John 10:1-4; 14:1-3; 13:34-35; 15:9-10; Rom. 8:32; Phil. 4:13, 19; Heb. 4:14-16).

Note: The above outline came from *Strengthening Your Marriage*, by Wayne Mack, page 32, 1977.

No husband has ever fully loved his wife in this way or to this extent.

IV. How does the Bible definition of love relate to the marriage relationship?

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love will last forever... I Corinthians 13:4-8a, NLT

Try putting your name in wherever the word “love” occurs.

This kind of love has to come from God. This is why it is so important to have God in your marriage. Without His love in our hearts, this love is impossible.

A. This love is:

1. Patient.
2. Kind.
3. A champion of justice and truth.
4. Always hopeful.

B. This love is not:

1. Jealous.
2. Boastful.
3. Proud
4. Rude.
5. Demanding.
6. Irritable.
7. Unforgiving.

C. This love:

1. Never gives up.
2. Never loses faith.
3. Endures through every circumstance.
4. Will last forever.

This kind of love is irresistible. If a wife received this kind of love from her husband there would be no need to worry about the issue of submission.

Lesson 6

Communication in Marriage

When we think of God's model of establishing relationship we learned that before a man and a woman are husband and wife, they are brothers and sisters in Christ. This means that they are to be one in the spirit.

As we carry that model forward, we can say that before a man and a woman are husband and wife, they should be best friends. This has to do with a unity in the soul realm of mind, will and emotions. Friendship cannot occur in the truest sense without quality communication between the parties involved.

Communication is the process by which one person passes on to another person his ideas and feelings. It comes from the word *communio* which involves "a sharing, a participation with and an impartation from one person to another." The purpose of communication can be to persuade, inform, entertain, or any combination of these things.

I. What is the purpose of communication in marriage?

The purpose of communication in marriage is:

- A. To help facilitate a growing relationship between the two parties.
- B. To contribute to the fellowship between the two parties.
- C. To assist the couple in becoming one.

Unity is essential if the marriage is going to be strong. Remember that marriage is a coming together of two different persons, opinions, views, sets of values, desires and ways of doing things. Unity is critical in all areas of life, but especially in marriage.

- 1. There is great power released in unity (Mt 18:15-20).
- 2. There is a multiplication of strength in unity (Deut 32:30).
- 3. Unity is necessary for true harmony (peace) to take place (I Cor 1:10).

Good marriages will have unity between husband and wife in three areas.

- a. Unity in purpose
- b. Unity in judgment
- c. Unity in practice

II. What happened to the process of communication when sin entered the human condition?

Man's fall in the garden had some devastating effects on the communication process (Genesis 3:1-13).

- A. Man had a desire to hide and not communicate (Gen 3:8).
- B. Man developed the tendency to shift blame for his failures (Gen 3:12-13).
- C. Man developed a tendency to lie and be deceitful (Gen 3:10).
- D. Man now tried to conceal himself from his spouse (Gen 3:7).

The intimacy and openness that Adam and Eve experienced initially was broken and marred by sin and now they naturally were inclined to conceal themselves from one another. Sin polluted man's ability to communicate in a positive and unifying way.

III. What are the two main kinds of communication in every marriage?

At any given time we are communicating in one way or another.

A. There is unifying conversation. Unifying conversation is that communication which draws us closer together and builds the relationship.

1. Unifying communication is fostered by several things. It is fostered by:

- a. Positive praise
- b. Encouragement
- c. Honest sharing in love
- d. Respectful dialogue
- e. Trust
- f. Kindness
- g. Consideration
- h. Humility

2. The result of unifying conversation is joy and blessing in the marriage.

B. There is divisive conversation. Divisive conversation is that communication which undermines or destroys the relationship.

1. Divisive communication is fed by several things. It is fed by:

- a. Anger
- b. Bitterness
- c. Selfishness
- d. Criticism
- e. Dishonesty
- f. Pride

2. The result of divisive communication is sickness and disease in the marriage.

- C. A relationship is that which exists between two persons as a result of their individual contribution. Whatever goes into the relationship will make up the relationship.

IV. What are some of the things that will help promote open, honest and unifying communication.

Unity is essential in marriage (Amos 3:3). Unity will only be achieved by open and honest communication.

- A. Make time for quality communication.

This will help you to stay up to date in your communication. This means turning the TV or Stereo off, putting the newspaper or book down and perhaps even shutting off your cell phone.

- B. Discuss everything. Be willing to put anything on the table to discuss.
- C. Make sure it is a good time for both to share. Learn to read your spouses moods. Ask your spouse, “When would be a good time for us to discuss this?”
- D. Pray before discussing particularly difficult areas.
- E. Attack the problem and not the person. Avoid using the word “you” in accusation.
- F. Communicate accurately avoiding exaggerations. “You always do this.”
- G. Try to phrase your sentences in an uplifting and “problem-solving” sort of way.
- H. Be a ready listener. That means we:
- Do not interrupt.
 - Listen more and talk less.
 - Take the time to understand what is really being said.
- I. Do not get defensive or react to individual words or statements. Listen to the heart not the facts of the matter. Don’t feel like you have to adjust every word. Look at the big picture.
- J. Try to put yourself in the other person’s position, to understand their point of view.
- K. Learn how to clarify the feelings of other.

Example: “I feel that you do not love me.” Wrong Reply: “Well of course I love you; I bring you my pay check every month don’t I?” Right Reply: “What am I doing or saying that is giving you the impression that I do not love you?”

L. Be slow to speak. This means we:

- Think things out first.
- Be sure of what you say.
- Avoid being reactionary.
- Wait for the right time to bring adjustment.
- Do not adjust in public.

M. When you are wrong, freely admit it.

N. When someone confesses to you forgive them quickly.

O. Be committed to the principle of no action without unity.

P. Be honest about the way you feel. Learn to share your feelings openly.

Q. Make it easy for your spouse to communicate.

R. Be willing to entertain a compromise. You've got to give a little.

S. Seek godly counsel over irresolvable issues.

T. In the end, be sure that the ground is really worth fighting over.

V. What are some of the things to avoid things that can destroy or inhibit good communication?

A. Don't go to bed angry (Eph. 4:26-27). Pray together.

B. Avoid communication destroyers. This will require a certain amount of self-control. Once any of these things is injected into the dialogue all meaningful communication stops.

1. Crying
2. Screaming
3. Silent Treatment
4. Door Slamming
5. Name Calling
6. Ridicule
7. Nagging
8. Interrupting
9. Correcting in public
10. Overreacting
11. Breaking Confidentiality (Talking to others about private matters).

C. Do not quarrel. Avoid anger. Take a "time out." Especially anger that throws out cutting, insulting and biting words.

- D. Do not make assumptions about the other person's motives or actions. Clarify everything. Sometimes we have simply misheard a statement.
- E. Do not respond in kind. If someone verbally attacks, criticizes or blames you, do not respond in the same manner. "Well, you're not to thin yourself!"
- F. Do not put down concepts that are different than yours. Be open.
- G. Don't hold things in. Deal with them early.
- H. Don't go back on a decision without mutual consent.
- I. Avoid all distractions when communicating. Give your undivided attention to the person speaking. Learn how to control the newspaper, magazines, books and television.
- J. Avoid rambling on and on about something that has been fully discussed. Know when to drop the subject.
- K. Don't continually return to subject matter that has already been discussed and agreed upon (especially when it did not go your way).
- L. Don't expect your spouse to be just like you.
- M. Don't get impatient for immediate results. Be committed to the process.

Lesson 7

Resolving Conflict in Marriage

Or:

1001 Irritations in Marriage and How to Deal with Them

We are living in a world that is plagued by divorce. If you would go back even sixty years you would find a completely different climate. Sixty years ago divorce was seen as a rarity. Society at large viewed it as an extreme negative and when high profile people got a divorce it was major news. In today's world over half of all marriages end in divorce. Second marriages have an even higher instance of divorce. There is even a term that is being used to apply to divorce that indicates the seriousness of the problem. The term is "serial divorce."

Why so many divorces? Is our society more violent? Is life in general more difficult? Are there unusual pressures on marriage? Is marriage harder to work out than it was sixty years ago? What is the cause of this high rate?

Most divorces in our world today are not based on some serious breach of the relationship. Serious breaches of the marriage covenant would include adultery, physical violence, alcohol or drug addictions that threaten the survival of the family life together.

Most divorces in our world today are for this thing called "incompatibility." What is incompatibility? The dictionary defines "incompatible" as "incapable of living together in agreement or harmony."

This word is used as a cause for divorce because the couple cannot cite one major thing for which they are want to separate or dissolve the marriage. For them it is a lot of little things. You can not put on the divorce papers that you are divorcing because my spouse squeezes the toothpaste tube in the middle or he doesn't replace the cap when he is finished brushing.

They cannot put their finger on one major cause for the divorce. It ends up being an accumulation of a thousand and one little irritations.

I. What is an irritation?

An irritation is "An incident, conversation or situation that has the ability to exasperate, nettle, provoke, rile, peeve, or anger a person or persons."

II. Why does marriage have the unique potential for so many irritations?

Marriage is the coming together of two persons into one. Unfortunately in many marriages they spend the first few months trying to figure out which one.

In order for true unity to take place, there must be the blending of two differing personalities, two differing backgrounds, two different cultures, two differing

perspectives, two differing preferences and two differing lifestyles. Because of all these differences there is the potential for many small and a few significant irritations.

Whenever two people choose to live together in total intimacy, there is a great need for coordination of efforts, plans, and decisions. This process of making two lifestyles into one opens up potential irritations in the following areas:

A. Matters of Personal Habit

Each partner had their own way of doing things before they got married. Now they have to merge and become one.

Examples:

1. How one squeezes toothpaste;
2. How one puts things away or doesn't put things away;
3. Dirty clothes on the floor or in the hamper;
4. How one folds their clothes;
5. How one dresses or doesn't dress;
6. How one bathes or doesn't bath.
7. Other areas of personal hygiene;
8. Who showers when;
9. Not rinsing out the sink or the tub;
10. How much time is spent in the bathroom;
11. Toilet seat up or down;
12. Leaving women's underwear all over the bathroom;
13. When to go to bed and when to get up;
14. Windows open or closed at night;
15. Electric blanket on 2, or 8;
16. Bringing cold feet in bed;
17. Mealtimes;
18. Who does what—cooking, cleaning, laundry, shopping, gardening, etc.?.;
19. When we do personal or family devotions;
20. How one drives the car;
21. Physical appearance (e.g. weight);
22. When and how we do exercise;
23. Radio on or off in the car;
24. Early or late for appointments;
25. Reading the newspaper and setting up the "wall";
26. TV programs and what to watch, how much to watch (Channel Surfing).
Women want to know what is on while men want to know what else is on.
27. Tastes in music and other entertainment (video games, etc.);
28. Movie selections—"Chick Flicks" or Total Nonstop Action;
29. Friendship.

Someone has said that “marriage is two people agreeing to change each other’s habits.”

B. Matters of Differing Taste

Examples:

1. Whether to buy this color or that color, this brand or that brand (Ill. Sprite vs. Coca Cola);
2. The kind of car to buy;
3. Type of breakfast meal;
4. The local church to attend;
5. How often to attend church;
6. Frequency of sex;
7. Hobbies;
8. This route to a location or that route (Which route is the shortest, the fastest or the least traffic);
9. This kind of furnishing or that kind;
10. Music that we listen to.
11. Whether to do what he wants tonight or what she wants.

C. Matters of Social Habit

Examples:

1. Corny or unfunny jokes;
2. Monopolizing conversation;
3. Just watching everybody else talk;
4. Interrupting constantly;
5. Adjusting poor memories of past events;
6. Being picky about details that aren’t really essential.

D. Matters of Household Management

Examples:

1. Writing checks and not recording what you wrote in the register;
2. Waiting to clean the living room until company comes;
3. Inviting people over without checking with the other party;
4. Unequal treatment of the children;
5. Eternal minor household repairs.

In all these areas there are opportunities for differing points of view which could give rise to irritation, which could give rise to conflict. These matters are a part of every day living together that must be resolved and worked out in order to maintain peace in the home.

III. Are there times when marriage partners are more susceptible to being irritated?

A. There are certain times when people are more likely to be irritated.

1. When one is tired;
2. When one just gets home from work;
3. When one is hungry;
4. When one is in a hurry;
5. When one is sick;
6. When one is depressed;
7. During hormonal changes (pregnancy);
8. When one is fasting;
9. Any combination of the above.

During these times one should take extra precaution to be more sensitive, tolerant, understanding and patient. These are times when one is not at his or her best. To be aware of these conditions and to respond appropriately (in a Christ-like manner) is to go a long way towards the strengthening of the relationship. Timing is a factor that must be recognized.

B. At these times one should be extra careful to avoid things that would cause irritation. After knowing each other for a few years, we know how to push each other's buttons. For example:

1. Bringing up today's negative events;
2. Opening up an issue that requires a policy-decision for the future, and which will require more time to discuss and conclude than is allowable at that time;
3. Making constructive criticism of bad habits;
4. Looking with a critical eye at the meal that is served;
5. Making big things out of little things;
6. Verbally noticing things that are undone.

IV. What biblical attitudes can help us to handle irritations that arise?

Romans 12:9-21

The headline in the Bible is "Behave like a Christian."

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but

associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I Peter 3:8-12

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

A. The Attitude of a Peacemaker

Scripture says that happiness and blessing are the rewards of a peacemaker (Mt. 5:9). Both husband and wife should make constant effort to preserve and maintain peace between one another (Eph. 4:3). This will necessitate sensitivity, humility and a forgiving heart. Both the husband and the wife must measure the value of peace against insisting on their own individual ways.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1-3

B. The Attitude of Submission

There must be a giving attitude on the part of both husband and wife (Eph. 5:21).

...submitting to one another in the fear of God.

The success and happiness of a marriage is somewhat dependant upon the degrees of willingness to defer to the desire or taste of your mate. Choosing to honor and concede to your spouse's desire or choice will eliminate many irritations and immediately produce unity (Rom. 12:10).

C. The Attitude of Patience

A disposition of tolerance, patience, and long-suffering is vitally necessary to diffuse potentially irritating situations. In order to not be "overcome of evil" but to "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21) each party must take his or her responsibility to:

1. Hold one's tongue when necessary.
2. Speak softly and tactfully instead of reacting with evil for evil.
3. To ask for forgiveness if offense has been given.
4. To have a sense of timing to what one says and does.

The enduring nature of forbearance will make this possible (PBPGINFWMY)

“Please Be Patient God Is Not Finished With Me Yet.”

D. The Attitude of Love

Love for one's spouse will seek their benefit, comfort and convenience (I Cor. 13:5). Love will endure until a solution has been achieved (I Cor. 13:8). True, divine love for each other will not keep a record of past irritations of wrongs (I Cor. 13:5).

E. The Attitude of Meekness

This is the attitude that both husband and wife must have to insure harmony in marriage. Meekness is yielding one's rights and expectations to God rather than insisting on them. To make an idol of what “I” want changed in you, will only breed resentment and competition. Only God can ultimately change my spouse for lasting good and bring him or her to a place where he or she meets my needs.

V. What practical steps should be taken to minimize and remove irritations?

- A. In your own private prayer yield your rights and expectations to God (Ps. 62:5).
- B. Take note of how you are saying what you are saying. How would you respond to what you are saying?
- C. Take note of your timing. Is this the time to bring this up?
- D. Try to put yourself in the place of your spouse.
- E. Don't view yourself as competitors. You are on the same team.
- F. Ask forgiveness if offense is taken.
- G. Be willing to compromise. Be the first to make changes.
- H. Be willing to do it your spouse's way if compromise does not appear appropriate or forthcoming.
- I. Take note of your tone of voice.
- J. Don't keep score regarding how many times you have been the one to defer.
- K. Be honest with each other about your feelings.

CHECK THE LOVE-LEVEL OF YOUR MARRIAGE

1. Do I really hear the criticisms and adjustments that my spouse suggests?
2. Am I making an effort to please him or her by willingly making those adjustments?
3. Have I allowed my irritations over things my spouse does to eclipse or overshadow my love and appreciation for him or her?
4. Do I express my appreciation for the small things that are done for me?

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Lesson 8

Ingredients of a Successful Marriage

The marriage contract is, in essence, the establishing of a covenant between two people. God has set the pattern for all covenants in His relationship to man. God's covenant with man is often interpreted as a marriage covenant (Ezek. 16:8; 60). When God entered into His covenant with man, this covenant was based on certain character qualities within God Himself that made such covenant possible. If we want our relationship to be successful, we must look to the highest source for our pattern and learn all we can from God's relationship to us.

I. What is the nature of the covenants that God made with mankind?

- A. The covenants that God made with man were very serious in God's mind. When God makes a covenant He has no intention of breaking that covenant, but He intends for it to be everlasting (Gen. 9:15-16; 17:7-8; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:9; 31:6, 8; Judg.2:1; Ps. 89:34; Jer. 33:20-21; Heb. 13:5).

And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. Genesis 17:7-8

God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? Numbers 23:19

Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you.'" Judges 2:1

For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5b

- B. God instructs us never to take our vows lightly either (Eccl. 5:1-7).

When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed--better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? Ecclesiastes 5:4-6

Question: When someone enters into a prenuptial agreement are they in essence making provision for the failure of the marriage?

Most prenuptial agreements are made with second marriages especially when there are children involved from the previous marriage. They are done to protect the inheritance of the children from that former union. In this sense they make some

sense. But prenuptial agreements outside of that reason do tend to provide a convenient escape clause if this marriage does not work. It can actually remove some of the motivation that we need to work hard on the relationship to make it succeed. Do you work the same in a marriage if it is only one of several options or if it is very easy to get out of?

II. What qualities does God possess that make it possible for Him to maintain His covenant with mankind?

There are certain qualities that are part of God's nature that make covenant commitment possible.

A. The Love of God (Deut. 7:6-8)

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

God is never motivated by self-interest or selfishness, but He chose to enter into covenant relationship because of His divine love.

B. The Faithfulness of God (Deut. 7:9; II Tim. 2:13)

Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments...

If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

II Timothy 2:13

If we are not faithful, he will still be faithful. Christ cannot deny who he is. –CEV

God is absolutely faithful because He is stable and unchanging in His commitments. He is a "Rock" and we can depend on the fact that if He made a vow today, it will be still in His heart to keep that vow tomorrow (Heb. 6:13-19).

For example, there was God's promise to Abraham. Since there was no one greater to swear by, God took an oath in his own name, saying: 14 "I will certainly bless you richly, and I will multiply your descendants into countless millions." 15 Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised. 16 When people take an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves to hold them to it. And without any question that oath is binding. 17 God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. 18 So God has

given us both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can take new courage, for we can hold on to his promise with confidence. 19 This confidence is like a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain of heaven into God's inner sanctuary. –NLT

C. The Forgiveness of God (Ps. 130:3-4)

If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. –NIV

God maintains His faithfulness to the covenant because He readily forgives the offenses of men. When He forgives, His forgiveness is complete (Neh. 9:17).

They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But you God are ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them.

Nehemiah 9:17

D. The Selflessness of God (Phil. 2:3-8)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross! –NIV

God loved the world so much that He sacrificially gave of Himself to establish a covenant relationship.

E. The Merciful-Kindness of God (Ps. 86:15; Dan. 9:9; Jon. 4:2; Mic. 7:18-20)

But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth. Psalm 86:15

Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old. Micah 7:18-20

God is full of mercy and is able to feel sympathy with those He has created (Heb. 2:17-18). His mercy is manifest in that He never gives up on us when we fail (Eph. 2:4) and He continually punishes us less than our sins deserve (Job 11:6).

III. How are these same qualities to be manifest in the keeping of our marriage vows?

A. The love of God must be the base of every marriage.

A man and woman need more than physical attraction. They need a divine love to exist between them that is not based on external circumstances. This love can only come from God (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:14; I Th. 3:12-4:9; I Pet. 4:8).

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” I Peter 4:8

B. Faithfulness to each other must be the determined goal of both marriage partners.

1. To be faithful is to be loyal, constant, steadfast and resolute.
2. To be faithful is to give unswerving adherence to a person, to an oath or to a promise.

If there is ever any hint by either party that the marriage relationship is anything less than permanent, a time of crisis will bring certain failure. God’s faithfulness extends to all facets of His relationship to man (I Th. 5:24; II Th. 3:3; Heb. 10:23; 11:11).

C. Forgiveness must be an operating principle in a successful marriage.

In the world’s view, “Love means you never have to say you are sorry.” God’s view is just the opposite. The whole marriage relationship should be based on repentance and forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness means “to cancel, to pardon or to release from debt” (Luke 6:37).
 - a. It involves a “putting aside, disregarding, putting away completely and unreservedly” the sins of another (Rom. 3:25). When God forgives He:
 - Remembers our sins no more (Jer. 31:34).
 - Removes our sins as far from Him as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).
 - Casts our sins into the sea of His forgetfulness, never to be remembered again (Mic. 7:18-19).

Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

- b. To forgive is to absolve from liability to punishment for a crime or fault committed.

- c. It is the voluntary release of a person over which one has legal control.
 - d. When God forgives it does not mean that He temporarily suspends punishment which He may at some later time inflict. God's forgiveness is complete and eternal.
2. True forgiveness involves a determination never to bring the subject up again (Ps. 103:8-12; Is. 38:17; Mic. 7:18, 19; Jer. 31:34). We cannot forget, but we can refuse to dwell on the matter any longer. When we choose not to dwell on the past failure, it becomes weaker and weaker in its power over our lives.

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. 9 He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 102:8-12

3. Forgiveness is a part of the duty of the Christian (Mt. 18:21-22).

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

4. God's forgiveness toward us is dependant upon our forgiveness of others (Mt. 5:23, 24; 6:12; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:37).

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. Mark 11:25

5. If we fail to forgive, we will live in torment (Mt. 18:32-35). The party who does not forgive will be the one who ends up paying the price.

Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

D. Selflessness must be in the heart of each marriage partner.

Unless both members of a marriage are putting the interest of the other before themselves (Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3,4) there is bound to be tension, jealousy, impatience, stubbornness, argumentativeness, criticism, harshness, pride and oversensitivity throughout. For true harmony to exist there must be a death to self and an exaltation of Christ (Mark 8:34-38). This means that we must release all of our expectations except that of service.

There are many traits in each of us that reflect the attitude of selfishness or “living for ourselves”. Check those areas in which you may manifest selfishness:

1. A spirit of exaltation and pride, feeling you are better than the other. When your spouse tells you that you got the best deal in their union...you believe them.
2. A love of human praise, a seeking to be noticed. When in the company of others you dominate the scene leaving your spouse unnoticed.
3. A centering of conversation around yourself and your own interests. The most common pronoun in your conversation is “I”.
4. A spirit of impatience with others. You may call it holy indignation, but it is the self shining through.
5. A spirit of retaliation or resentment when opposed or contradicted. It manifests itself in a “get even” spirit.
6. A tendency to criticize and pick flaws when the other has been successful. This involves putting your marriage partner down and using sarcasm rather than praising and encouraging.
7. A jealous disposition and a secret spirit of envy. When your spouse is having success and is being noticed more than you...you will make up for it at home.

E. Merciful kindness must exist in abundance in the marriage.

There are many opportunities in marriage to manifest merciful kindness. If we are unmerciful with our spouse, we cannot expect God to be merciful with us (Ps. 18:25-27; Mt. 5:7; 9:13).

With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. For You will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks.

1. Mercy loves when love is not deserved (Deut. 7:7).
2. Mercy reaches out to rescue from danger (Gen. 19:16).
3. Mercy stands along side in times of trouble even though we brought the trouble on ourselves (Deut. 4:31).
4. Mercy has compassion on those in misery (Judg. 10:13-16).
5. Mercy punishes less than sins deserve (Ezra 9:13; Job 11:6).

Because the qualities of love, faithfulness, forgiveness, selflessness and mercy abound in God, God is able to keep covenant with His people in spite of their many failings.

These qualities must abound in us if we are to maintain the covenant that we established with our spouse.

IV. What are some key ingredients to be added to our marriage relationship to help get the most out of it?

These key ingredients can be seen best by the following chart:

	Ingredient	Explanation
C	Commitment	Commitment is a pledge to each other that regardless of circumstances we are in this marriage together for life (Mt. 19:6).
O	Ownership	In marriage we recognize that we do not own ourselves but that the ownership of our life is given to our spouse (I Cor. 7:4).
V	Veneration	Veneration means that we treat each other with honor, adoration, reverence and respect as the weaker or treasured vessel (I Pet. 3:7).
E	Earnest Effort	In marriage we recognize the necessity of both parties putting forth a sincere, genuine effort (work) to make certain of its success.
N	Nourishment	Both parties in marriage understand their personal responsibility to contribute those things that will nourish, promote and sustain life.
A	Attention	Both parties are responsible before God to attend to the needs of the other and to listen to and be attentive to their concerns.
N	Nurture	Both parties in the marriage are to nurture, give constant attention to, cherish, protect, cultivate and water their relationship.
T	Tolerance	Both parties in the marriage are to be patient with the other, willing to give them room to grow and ready to forgive and extend mercy.

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Lesson 9

Sex in Marriage

Apart from the financial side of marriage, there is perhaps no other issue in marriage that creates more conflict than the area of sex. The truth is that many divorces are applied for on the basis of “sexual incompatibility.” Just what is sexual incompatibility? Does this mean that the couple is having some difficulty with the physical or mechanical side of their sexual relationship? This is not likely the case.

Usually the problem in the sexual side to marriage has something to do with unfulfilled expectations regarding sex in marriage, a wrong view of sex in marriage or some other non-sexual aspect of the marriage relationship. As a result, instead of the sexual act in marriage being a source of satisfaction and intimacy, it becomes a battleground or point of controversy.

Let’s talk about our view of sex in marriage. Obviously, this view can be shaped by many things. It can be shaped by our parents, our cultural mores, our childhood relationships or the entertainment industry. We want our view to be shaped by God and His word in this area of our married life.

I. What is the Christian view of sex?

As with all other areas of life, we as Christians must accept God’s view of sex. But what is the Christian view? We may not be open to the Christian view of sex because we think of God as prudish when it comes to sex. If you still feel that way after reading the Song of Solomon come back to me for a little chat.

A. We must recognize that sex was God’s idea.

God could have designed man in any way He so desired. He created men and women as sexual beings. His plan involved man’s ability to be fruitful and to multiply. The sexual relationship was created by God for good and not evil. God made it to be a pleasurable experience to ensure that man and woman would actually participate in the sexual side of their relationship.

B. The God intended benefits of sex can only be experienced as we use it in harmony with His purpose.

Marriage is the only context that God sanctions for sexual expression. In fact, it is the sexual aspect of marriage that separates it from all other types of human relationship. Though other aspects of marriage can be shared with other people (e.g. eating, conversing, friendship, etc.) the sexual relationship is part of the unique life commitment that constitutes a marriage. We won’t go into all of the words that God uses to describe sexual sin, but be assured when I say that sexual expression is to be reserved for marriage.

C. The worldly abuse of sex should not be allowed to destroy our confidence in its positive value.

In opposing the negatives of the world's view of sex, many Christians have gone to the other extreme and ignored the positives of God's view. This has produced an unhealthy, negative attitude toward sex. Christians should be as much for the right use of sex as they are opposed to its abuse.

D. The sexual relationship in marriage should be seen as something sacred.

The sexual side of marriage is sacred for several reasons. It is sacred because:

1. It is to be a reflection of the ultimate union of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31, 32).
2. It represents the total intimacy of the marriage relationship (Gen. 2:23-25).
3. It is the means by which new lives are brought into existence (Gen. 4:1).

E. The sexual relationship in marriage should be a method of sharing with, communing with and selfless giving of oneself to the other (I Cor. 7:1-5).

Now about the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to live a celibate life. 2 But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. 3 The husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy, which is her right as a married woman, nor should the wife deprive her husband. 4 The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband also gives authority over his body to his wife. 5 So do not deprive each other of sexual relations. The only exception to this rule would be the agreement of both husband and wife to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time, so they can give themselves more completely to prayer. Afterward they should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt them because of their lack of self-control. –NLT

F. The sexual relationship in marriage should be seen as a private matter.

1. Not because it is evil but because it is holy.
2. Not because it is so shameful.
3. But because it is meant to be the highest expression of intimacy.

G. God's view of the sexual relationship is summarized in Hebrews 13:4.

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. –NIV

Have respect for marriage. Always be faithful to your partner, because God will punish anyone who is immoral or unfaithful in marriage. –CEV

Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex. –MSG

Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery. –NLT

This verse teaches four things:

1. Marriage is honorable. It is to be esteemed and revered as the highest form of human relationship.
2. The married bed is not to be defiled. It is to be a special place of delight, refreshment, comfort, strength, communion and nurture. It is defiled through adultery or unfaithfulness.
3. Sex outside of marriage constitutes a sinful use of sex (Pro. 6:32). It is possible to abuse and misuse this God-given joy of sex. The marriage bed must be kept undefiled, that is, guarded and preserved from all unfaithfulness and exploitation.
4. God does not treat adultery lightly. It is such an important issue that God will not allow misuse to go unchecked.

II. What are some wrong concepts of sex?

A. “Sex is dirty and evil.”

This statement ignores the fact that sex was created by God before sin entered the human race (Gen. 2:3). It is clean and holy in the sight of God when it is kept free from sin and lust.

B. “Sex is shameful.”

This is contrary to the fact that God created sex to be beautiful and meaningful. Before sin entered, Adam and Eve were naked and “not ashamed” (Gen. 2:24, 25).

C. “Sex is carnal.”

The members of our bodies can be instruments of righteousness or unrighteousness (Rom. 6:12-19). Our sexual life can be lived according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. If it is lived according to the flesh, it will be compulsive, self-centered and exploitative. If it is lived according to the Spirit, it will be controlled, fulfilling and mutually edifying.

D. “Sex is for reproduction only.”

If design indicates purpose, then the Lord intended intercourse to be an experience of supreme pleasure. The Bible supports the view that sex is to be enjoyed

whether conception takes place or not (Pro. 5:18, 19; Eccl. 9:9). The entire Song of Solomon also illustrates this (Note the word “delight” in Song 2:3; 7:7).

E. “Sex is a drive equal to hunger and thirst.”

This is not true. It is a strong drive but it is not to be compared for the need for food. Without food we die. With or without sexual expression we can live a fulfilled life. The Bible says that it is better to marry than to burn. But Paul made it clear that you can remain single and fulfill your destiny (I Cor. 7:1, 7-9).

I wish everyone could get along without marrying, just as I do. But we are not all the same. God gives some the gift of marriage, and to others he gives the gift of singleness. Now I say to those who aren't married and to widows—it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust. I Corinthians 7:7-9

F. “All physical affection is sexual.”

This is not true. The physical expression of affection shared by family members (e.g. father to daughter, mother to son, brothers and sisters) and close friends is not aimed at sexual union. We must not allow a worldly sex-consciousness to rob us of proper “family affection” (I Kings 19:20; Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Th. 5:26; I Pet. 5:14). If a couple at some point loses the ability to function sexually, it does not negate the marriage.

III. What place does sex have in life?

A. Sex is a part of life.

Sex must be viewed as having a small place in life. It is when sex is not kept in its proper place that many problems arise. The following statements and illustrations will serve to give this perspective.

1. Life is more than marriage.

Marriage is not the key to life. A proper relationship to Jesus Christ and living a life of significance are the keys to life.

2. Marriage is more than sex.

It is possible to have a happy marriage without sex. Sex is just one of the aspects of marriage. Marriage is a covenant of companionship more than a mutual agreement to satisfy the sexual appetites of one's marriage partner.

3. Sex is more than physiology.

Sexual relations are much more than the sum of the anatomy involved. While it is important for men and women to learn how the physical body is

stimulated in this area, the key to sexual compatibility has more to do with how the rest of the marriage is working out.

B. Sex is related to other areas of life.

1. The sexual relationship is the ultimate expression of the larger relationship of marriage. It affects and is shaped by all the circumstances and feelings involved in such a partnership.
2. The sexual relationship must be seen in the context of the other aspect of our life including sympathy, understanding, adoration, appreciation, consideration and gentleness. The spiritual and soul aspects of the marital relationship should be seen as equally, if not more important than the physical aspect of marriage.
3. A good sexual relationship or “good sex” does not insure a good marriage. Just the opposite, a good marriage insures a meaningful sexual relationship.
4. This integration of sex into life distinguishes man from the sexual nature of animals, which is purely instinct without affection and biology without love.
5. Marriage is a union of spirit, soul and body. In quantity of time, the physical aspect of marriage is far less important than the emotional, intellectual and practical involvement of the couple. Thus in preparation for marriage the physical needs no emphasis in that it is the easiest and quickest area to learn if the other areas of the relationship are in order.
6. Sex in marriage should never be an end in itself. If you treat your mate as an object of your sexual gratification, you are creating an intolerable climate for real love. In addition you are setting yourself up for ultimate failure.

IV. What is the purpose of sex in marriage?

Sex in the marriage relationship has three main purposes (from unpublished notes by Jan Weinstein, pg. 41):

A. Communication

Lovemaking is a profound means of communicating between husband and wife. Affection, acceptance, trust, cherishing and giving are only a few of the many things communicated through lovemaking.

B. Recreation

As indicated in the Song of Solomon, the act of lovemaking is intended to be fun, joyful and delightful. It is intended to emotionally nourish one’s marriage partner.

C. Procreation

An obvious potential by-product of lovemaking is the conception of a child. However, contrary to some teaching, this is not the only purpose. In the first scriptural reference to the marriage relationship there is no mention of children, conception or multiplication (Gen. 2:4).

V. Why does God confine sex to marriage?

There are two kinds of answers to this question, one that focuses on the positive things that sex becomes in marriage, and the other on what negative things it becomes outside of marriage. Sexuality has the potential for good or evil, depending on motivation and expression.

A. Positive reasons

The following are the positive results of confining sex to marriage:

1. It is consistent with God's purpose.
2. It heightens its value.
3. It represents the permanent exclusive, unqualified commitment of marriage.
4. It bases enjoyment on commitment.
5. It makes intercourse the language of oneness.
6. It permits sex to be the "icing" rather than the foundation of relationship.

B. Negative reasons

The following are the negative results of sex outside of marriage:

1. It hinders the development of the non-physical aspects of the relationship before and after the marriage.
2. It produces tension between the sexes.
3. It hinders married sexual fulfillment.
4. It produces spiritual, mental and emotional bondage.
5. It can lead to unwanted pregnancies, abortion and sexually transmitted diseases.

VI. What principles should govern the sexual life of a married Christian couple?

A. Love

Christian love is the greatest single factor contributing to a fulfilling sexual union. Love is having a greater desire to give than to receive. Both the husband and wife should desire to give and be willing to receive.

B. Meekness

Meekness is yielding our personal rights and expectations to God. Much frustration in marriage is caused by expecting too much from our partner and

reacting when they do not give us what we believe to be rightfully ours. Viewing God as the source of all fulfillment in life will free us to love each other unreservedly and to stand together through any difficulty.

C. Communication

Based on love and meekness, any couple that is faithful to communicate will be able to find their way along the pathway of fulfillment. Failure to communicate clearly will only lead to frustration, hurt, resentment and fear.

D. Purity

The sexual life of a couple must be kept free from contaminating influences. Our hearts must be kept free from selfish desires, our minds from impure thoughts and our lives from the world's sensual barrage. Asking your spouse to do what is done in "porno" movies is corrupting the marriage bed.

E. Self-control

Controlling our desires brings freedom and greater fulfillment. Control is not only essential during necessary times of abstinence in marriage; it is always a factor in releasing fulfillment.

F. Sensitivity

There is a constant need for both the husband and wife to be sensitive to each other's needs and desires. A servant's heart and plenty of personal consideration shown in all areas of marriage will contribute much to its success.

G. Preparation

Just as all important events in life receive special preparation, so should the sexual relationship of a couple. This should include thoughtfulness, cleanliness, a clear conscience and positive attitudes. It may also require a change in wardrobe, improved personal habits, rest, and a lock on the bedroom door.

VII. What are some of the things that will make for better sex in marriage?

I think we have learned by now that sex is more than an act in the bedroom. It is an intimate expression between a married couple based on mutual respect, admiration and love. Because it is not just an "animal-like" experience there are factors that make it more or less enjoyable.

A. Things that reduce sexual enjoyment in marriage.

1. Improper Communication

This includes belittling, embarrassing, devaluing or offending (Pro. 18:10).

2. Lack of Servanthood

This includes inconsiderateness, making demands, anger or dishonoring.

3. Betrayal of any Kind

This includes breaking confidence, telling secrets, disloyalty or infidelity.

- B. Things that increase sexual enjoyment in marriage.

1. Uplifting Communication

This includes encouraging, praising, defending and showing appreciation.

2. Servanthood

This includes serving, helping with chores, considerateness (“Sex begins in the kitchen”).

3. Faithfulness

This includes statements of love and commitment and demonstrating fidelity by how you interact with other members of the opposite sex.

VIII. What are some helpful hints in teaching children about sex?

- A. Concentrate on instilling proper values more than giving factual knowledge.
- B. Be approachable on the subject.
- C. Respond to their questions honestly without giving more in your answer than they really asked for.
- D. Do not project negative attitudes concerning the subject.
- E. Be careful not to arouse curiosity and promote undue interest.
- F. Build biblical concepts, values and attitudes throughout their lives, instead of waiting for one “big talk”.

Note: Much of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

Lesson 10

Maintaining First Love in Marriage

One of the keys to marital success is keeping love alive in the marriage. This is something that must be worked at. The more you feed something the more it prospers. The more you neglect something the more it fades.

This is no different in our relationship to the Lord. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus addressed seven churches. He usually had both good things to commend and negative things to rebuke. One key church was the church at Ephesus. This church had many things going for it of a positive nature, but God was concerned about a negative sign. The reason that we are looking at this in our marriage class is that what happened in the Church at Ephesus is the same as what is happening in many marriages.

I. What was the problem in relation to the Church at Ephesus?

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, "These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 2 'I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent. 6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.'" Revelation 2:1-7

A. The Church at Ephesus had many positive traits.

1. They were working hard for the Lord.
2. They had correct doctrine.
3. They did not tolerate false teachers.
4. They were very busy with lots of activity.

B. The Church at Ephesus had one serious problem—they had left their first love.

Other translations:

But this I have against you—you have abandoned your first love. –TCNT

You no longer love me as you did at the first. –LB

You have abandon the love that you had at the first. –RSV

Jesus had foreseen that this would be a problem (Mt. 24:12).

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

This is something that can take the purpose or meaning out of all of our labor and activity. It can take the joy out of the relationship.

- C. God addressed this problem with His relationship to His people (Jer. 2:1-2).

The LORD gave me another message. He said, "Go and shout in Jerusalem's streets: 'This is what the LORD says: I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness.'" –NLT

We must remember man was made for relationship to God. God is not interested in our works, our correct doctrine and our activity. He is interested in our hearts.

II. How is this same problem to be seen in marriage?

Many married couples have let the activities of life disrupt their first love relationship.

- A. In many marriages the parties in the marriage are working hard for each other.
- B. They believe all the right things about how marriage is to work.
- C. They have lives filled with all kinds of activities mostly surrounding the lives of their children.

“Don’t get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life!”

- D. However, they have drifted from their first love. Their first love has grown cold. It is like the untended fire that gradually cools down and finally goes completely out.

One day they wake up and realize, “I do not even know the person to whom I am married!”

It is a proven fact that the most difficult years of marriage are the ones following the wedding.

III. What was God’s solution to the problem?

The solution for the church is the same as the solution for our marriages (Rev. 2:5).

- A. They were to remember.

They were to remember how it was in the beginning when they fell in love for the first time when the relationship was fresh.

- B. They were to repent.

They were to repent, that is, change what they were doing. Somehow the challenge was to recognize what is happening and be willing to do something different.

C. They were to do as they once did.

They were to begin to do the things that they did at the first in the relationship (not the sinful or negative things, but the positive things).

IV. What does a “first love” relationship look like?

I know about first love relationship from my personal experience, but also from an experience that I had in 1976. I was in Ireland with a team of college students for 45 days. Two of the men on the team were due to be married within two weeks of our arrival home.

A. Our first love relationship with the Lord looks something like this. Once we:

1. Thought and talked about **the Lord** all the time.
2. Tried to please **the Lord** at all times.
3. Shared our most intimate thoughts, desires and feelings with **the Lord**.
4. Included **the Lord** in all our plans, present and future.
5. Talked to **the Lord** as much as possible.
6. Befriended **the Lord**, speaking only good of **the Lord**.
7. Loved to be in the presence of **the Lord** continually.
8. Loved to praise **the Lord** for even the smallest things.
9. Put **the Lord** first in all things (self-denial).
10. Were very sensitive to the feelings of **the Lord**.

B. Our first love relationship in marriage looks very similar. Once we:

1. Thought and talked about _____ all the time. Ill. Courtship by letter
2. Tried to please _____ at all times. Ill. Courtesy. You had to make her feel that she was better off with you than without you. Opening the door and putting our coat down in the puddle has now become, “Jump it baby!”
Joke: Do you think you can carry all four suitcases?
3. Shared our most intimate thoughts, desires and feelings with _____.
4. Included _____ in all our plans, present and future. You wouldn’t thing of making plans without them.

5. Talked to _____ as much as possible. Communication is the key to a successful relationship. Remember when your parents made you limit the time of your calls?
6. Befriended _____, speaking only good of _____.
7. Loved to be in the presence of _____ continually. The closer the better.
8. Loved to praise _____ for even the smallest things. After a while it is easy to take each other for granted.
9. Put _____ first in all things (self-denial). She must sense that she is first place in your life. Joke: The three most common words before marriage are "I love you." The three most common words after marriage are "Let's eat out." Pork Chop story.
10. Were very sensitive to the feelings of _____. Always considered their opinion important. Would listen for what was said and what was not said. Would never consider rebuking or correcting in public.

What we do to win people is what we must do to keep people.

V. What are the promises to and result of those who will maintain their first love?

They are restored to the tree of life in their relationship.

- A. The love relationship becomes progressive.
- B. Their habits and ways become your habits and ways.
- C. Their interests become your interests.
- D. There is always happiness and joy in their presence.
- E. Others can find life in their relationship.
- F. **The two become one!**

The two do not become one just because we have exchanged vows. This is a process that takes time and is the product of a commitment to maintain first love throughout our married lives.

VI. What are some of the practical ways in which husbands and wives can express their love for each other?

- A. Ways husbands can love their wives.

1. Arrange a date once a week.
2. Call her from work to ask her out.
3. Give flowers or some other small gift for no reason.
4. Write love notes and hide them for her to find.
5. Help her with some of her chores.
6. Allow direct access to any of her calls.
7. Call her during the day for no apparent reason.
8. Treat her with honor and respect.
 - Help on with coat.
 - Open car door
 - Help with chair in restaurants
 - Introduce her properly
9. Tell her you love her daily in a creative way.
10. Babysitting for her so that she can do something she likes to do.
11. Fix things that are a concern to her.
12. Praise her in front of others.
13. Pray with her and for her.
14. Ask for her advice and opinions about important issues.
15. Thank her for all of her attempts to please you.
16. Change the areas that you know are an annoyance to her.
17. Ask forgiveness when you have been wrong.
18. Go shopping with her and show genuine interest.
19. Take her hand when walking in public or private.
20. Treat her relative with respect.
21. Take her out to buy a new outfit.
22. Remind her of the early days of your first love.
23. Tell her of the highlights of your day.
24. Remember her birthday and anniversary.
25. Watch a movie that you know she likes.
26. Respond to her gestures of romance.
27. Run errands for her.
28. Give her your full attention when she speaks.
29. Get up for the children at night, letting her sleep on.
30. Play with the children and keep them busy with a game.
31. Keep yourself clean and attractive.
32. Get involved in a ministry together.
33. Keep overtime and working late to a minimum.
34. Plan occasional “escapes” or time away together.
35. Care for her when she is sick.
36. Take an interest in the children’s school activities.
37. Go for regular walk with her.
38. Caress and hold her without the desire for sex.
39. Etc. Etc. Etc.

B. Ways wives can love their husbands.

Many of those things listed above could equally apply to wives.

1. Greeting him when he comes home.
2. Surprise him with unexpected romance.
3. Flirt with him.
4. Tell him what you admire about him.
5. Support him when he tries to please you.
6. Sit close to him.
7. Write special notes of love and affection.
8. Participate with him in one of his hobbies or interests.
9. Cooperate with any attempt by him to read the Bible and pray together.
10. Watch your use of money and time.
11. Treat his friends with kindness.
12. Ask him for his advice and opinions.
13. Thank him when you notice his attempts to please you.
14. Be punctual.
15. Work on changing things that you know annoy him.
16. Cooking things that you know he likes.
17. Pamper him.
18. Brag about him to others.
19. Give him lingering kisses from time to time.
20. Dress the way he likes.
21. Etc. Etc. Etc.

Closing this Session

Pray for Marriages

Have them join hands together with their spouse.

If the Lord has spoken to you tonight and in this series I am going to ask you to make a commitment—first of all to Him and secondly to your spouse.

If you would like to make a renewed commitment to your marriage partner, I want you to squeeze their hand gently as a signal to them of your intention to invest more into the relationship.

What is the problem?	The Love of Many Has Grown Cold
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Even though they are working hard for _____. 2. Even though they appear to be doing everything right.
What are we to do?	Remember... Repent, and Do As You Once Did
	<p>Once we:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thought and talked about _____ all the time. 2. Tried to please _____ at all times. 3. Shared our most intimate thoughts, desires and feelings with _____. 4. Included _____ in all our plans, present and future. 5. Talked to _____ as much as possible. 6. Befriended _____, speaking only good of _____. 7. Loved to be in the presence of _____ continually. 8. Loved to praise _____ for even the smallest things. 9. Put _____ first in all things (self-denial). 10. Were very sensitive to the feelings of _____.
What are the results?	To Eat of the Tree of Life
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The love relationship becomes progressive. 2. Their habits and ways become your habits and ways. 3. Their interests become your interests. 4. There is always happiness and joy in their presence. 5. THE TWO BECOME ONE! <p style="text-align: right;">© Bill Scheidler</p>

Lesson 11

Parental Responsibilities

When God originally made Adam, there was something that was obviously incomplete about him. As Adam observed all the animals each having male and female, he was made aware of his need for a help suitable to him who would help him in fulfilling God's commission to him (Gen. 2:20). God did a miracle for this first man by creating a woman to be with him and to help him fulfill His purpose. However, at this point the first family was still incomplete. Eve was a wife and Adam was a husband, but in order to fulfill God's commission they needed to bring forth offspring. When they had children, they entered the whole new realm of parenthood (Gen 4:1-2).

I. What is the importance of parents?

Parents are very important to God because:

- A. Parents are the vessels through whom God desires to promote His eternal purpose in each family (Gen 1:26-28).
 - 1. As such, parents are responsible to be fruitful and multiply.
 - 2. As such, parents are to aid in the production of godly character and maturity in the family members.
 - 3. As such, parents are to help bring forth God's deposit, potential and ministry that He has placed in each child.
 - 4. As such, parents are to see that their children come to know and experience true fellowship with God.
- B. Parents are the mediators of God's covenants to the family members. This means that the parents are to their children what the Lord is to them (Eph. 6:1; Ex. 12:3). Children will often form their view of God based on what they see in their parents.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord (as His representatives), for this is just and right. Ephesians 6:1, Amp.

Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: "On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household." Exodus 12:3

II. What are the privileges of being parents?

Parents who build their homes according to God's design receive a special blessing from the Lord when they are able to see the fruit of their hands prospering. The reward of being a parent is the fruit that their efforts have produced. Parents have the privilege of seeing their children:

- A. Live a long and prosperous life (Deut. 11:18-21).
- B. Walk in the ways of the Lord and fulfill His will and purpose for their life (Deut. 4:9-10; 6:7-12; Ex. 12:26; Gen. 18:19).
- C. Know God personally and pass on the knowledge of God to their children (Ps. 78:5-6; Joel 1:3).

III. What is the unique challenge of parenting at this point in history?

We are going to be responsible for rearing one of two kinds of generations.

A. A rebellious and perverse generation (Pro. 30:11-14)

There is a generation that curses its father, and does not bless its mother. There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness. There is a generation-- oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

B. A chosen and a holy generation (I Pet. 2:9-10)

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Our children are either going to be part of the solution or part of the problem. A great deal of how they end up is based on the parenting that they have or have not received.

IV. What are the biblical responsibilities of parents?

God has a great deal that He wants to accomplish through the ministry of the parents. However, these things will never be accomplished unless the parents take the responsibility that God has given to them. Parents are not free to “do their thing” but they have been given serious responsibilities and a charge by God in the following areas:

A. Providing (I Tim. 5:8)

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. I Timothy 5:8

To provide for your family is more than making sure that they have food, clothing and housing, although these are very important. Sometimes we feel we have done our duty by feeding them when they are hungry, clothing them and getting them through university. However, provision includes many other things. Parents are to

provide in all areas of life including spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual, vocational and moral areas.

B. Protecting (Mt. 18:6)

The parents are the ones who are responsible to guard the children and protect them from all the forces which could destroy the wholeness that God intended for them. Protection is more than preserving them from physical harm. It involves guarding their children from sin, strife, idleness, worldliness, evil associations, dishonesty, hate, moral impurity and anything else that would cause them to become less than what God intended for them to be. It also involves not doing anything as a parent that would bring harm to them sexually, emotionally or physically.

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

But if you give them a hard time, bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you'll soon wish you hadn't. You'd be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck. –MSG

Children need protecting because:

1. They are valuable (Ps. 128:3). They are the only eternal things that we possess. They are the only thing that you can “take with you.”
2. They are damageable (Ps. 144:12).

May our sons flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants. May our daughters be like graceful pillars, carved to beautify a palace. –NLT

3. They are corruptible (Pro. 22:15).

C. Training (Pro. 22:6; Eph. 6:4)

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

Whether they fully realize it or not, parents spend all of their time training those whom God has placed under them. All parents train their children, but all parents do not train them to godliness. Training involves bringing our children to maturity with all of the equipment that they need to be successful and to make wise decisions in life.

1. Children need training because:
 - a. Children are born with a nature inclined to sin (Ps. 51:5).

For I was born a sinner--yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

–NLT

- b. Children are born without knowledge (Pro. 22:15).

All children are foolish, but firm correction will make them change. –CEV

- c. Children are impressionable and imitators of others (Ezek. 16:44).

*Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use this proverb against you:
“Like mother, like daughter!”*

- d. Children are vulnerable (Mt. 10:16). They need to be trained to beware of and avoid the dangers of life.
- e. Children have unlimited potential. By training and discipline we can bring out the best in them.
- f. Children are the carriers of culture (Ps. 78:4-8; 145:4). Christianity is only ever one generation away from extinction. The Christian faith is passed down through the generations as parents train their children in the ways of God.

Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, 3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. 5 For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; 6 That the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children 7 that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; 8 And may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God. Psalm 78:1-8

2. Parents train by three primary means:

- a. By their example (Deut. 6:4-9).

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The challenge of the Lord in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 is to teach our children at all times.

- When you are sitting down. This means that you are teaching during times of relaxation.
- When you are walking or moving about. This means that you are teaching when you are traveling around.
- When you go to lie down. This means that you are teaching at bedtimes.
- When you rise up. This means that you are teaching in the morning.

It is obvious from this passage that the predominant means of training for our children in the ways of the Lord is the lifestyle of the parents. Children learn many things just from observing their parents. They learn:

- Attitudes
- How to handle problems
- How to respond to authority
- How to work
- How to live life in general
- How to be a parent themselves

They learn these things because they are a reflection of what is in the heart of their parents (Deut. 6:6). Because they are in their hearts, they are also on the doorposts and walls of their home.

b. By direct teaching (Deut. 4:9-10).

Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, "Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children."

Deuteronomy 4:9-10

This is not a responsibility that belongs to the church, the school system or the television (MTV). This is the responsibility of the father and mother and it cannot be delegated away (Pro. 1:8; 4:1; 13:1; 15:5; 23:22-23).

My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck. Proverbs 1:8-9

Listen, my child, to what your father teaches you. Don't neglect your mother's teaching. What you learn from them will crown you with grace and clothe you with honor. -NLT

- c. By loving discipline (Heb. 12:5b-12).

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

3. The Book of Proverbs outlines the main areas of instruction and training that parents are to provide for their children.
- a. How to respond to authority (Pro. 1:8-9; 24:21-22).
 - b. How to resist peer and social pressure (Pro. 1:10-14).
 - c. How to avoid greed and covetousness (Pro. 1:15-19).
 - d. How to value wisdom and avoid moral impurity (Pro. 2:1-22).
 - e. How to earn respect by God and others (Pro. 3:1-10).
 - f. How to handle finances and how to prosper (Pro. 3:1-10; 6:11-19).
 - g. How to respond to correction (Pro. 3:11-20).
 - h. Why good is superior to evil (Pro. 3:21-35).
 - i. How to guard your heart (Pro. 4:20-27).
 - j. How to avoid immoral relationships with the opposite sex (Pro. 5).
 - k. Why diligence is superior to slothfulness (Pro. 6).
 - l. How to avoid deception (Pro. 19:27).
 - m. How to avoid drunkenness and gluttony (Pro. 23:19-35).
 - n. Etc., Etc, Etc.

D. Guiding (Gen. 18:19)

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.

Parents are not to just sit back and let their children make their own way through life. They are to aid their children and equip their children in the decision-making processes of life by contributing their wisdom and experience. Guidance involves aiming our children as one would aim an arrow. This is not passive involvement but active participation (Ps. 127:3-5). We will look at this area a little more fully in a later lesson.

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

When the parents take responsibility in all of these areas, they have truly provided a context and an environment that is conducive to godliness, change and growth.

IV. What happens when parents fail to take their responsibility?

Chaos and confusion prevail!

When parents fail to take their responsibility they can expect their offspring to inherit curses instead of blessings (Ex. 20:5). They can expect to raise a generation that will hate them and bring them to shame (Pro. 30:11-14; Pro. 29:15).

The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Proverbs 29:15

V. What happens when parents fulfill the charge that God has given to them?

When parents have truly given themselves to the charge that God has given to them, they can expect God to reward them in special ways. God will turn the hearts of the children to the parents (Mal. 4:6); the children will rise up and call them “blessed” (Pro. 31:28); and their children will truly be as olive plants about their table (Ps. 128:3).

How happy are those who fear the LORD--all who follow his ways! You will enjoy the fruit of your labor. How happy you will be! How rich your life! Your wife will be like a fruitful vine, flourishing within your home. And look at all those children! There they sit around your table as vigorous and healthy as young olive trees. That is the LORD's reward for those who fear him. May the LORD continually bless you from Zion. May you see Jerusalem prosper as long as you live. May you live to enjoy your grandchildren. And may Israel have quietness and peace. Psalm 128, NLT

Note: Some of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

A Personal Checkup

How is my example speaking to my children in the following seven areas:

A. Values

1. Is the way I'm handling my money teaching my children biblical values?
2. Is the way I'm using my time training my children to put God first?

B. Attitudes

3. Is my attitude towards authority teaching my children to respond whole-heartedly to God's delegated authority?
4. Does my outlook on life inspire positive attitudes in my children?
5. Do I demonstrate the kind of love that teaches my children to love as God does?
6. Does my attitude of meekness teach my children to yield their rights to God?

C. Right Words

7. Does my daily language consistently teach my children to communicate in an edifying manner?
8. Do my words of commendation encourage and motivate my children to more good works?

D. Behavior and Godly Habits

9. Does my behavior teach my children something different than my words?
10. Are my children learning self-control by my balanced lifestyle?

E. Friends

11. Does my circle of friends teach my children how to choose and develop proper friendships?
12. Am I reaching out to others and thereby teaching my children to enlarge their circle of friends?

F. Wisdom

13. Am I teaching my children wisdom and good judgment by making daily decisions based on the principles of God?
14. Does my response to my failures teach my children how to learn from their own?
15. Do I relate God's Word to experiences and circumstances in daily situations in my home?

G. Physical Health

16. Does my general physical condition motivate my children to keep themselves in good health?
17. It is vital that parents examine each one of these areas in their own personal lives and evaluate whether or not their lifestyle would be desirable to be passed on to their children.
18. Evaluate the above areas and check the ones in which you as a parent feel that you are being a consistently godly example.

Lesson 12

The Value of Children

One of the characteristics of a perverse and a rebellious generation is a low regard and a lack of respect for other people (II Tim. 3:3). The Greek word “without natural affection” is a word that means without normal family love. In the last days we will not see the normal family love that you would expect among kindred or family members.

Certainly this is the result of a self-centered and pleasure seeking mentality that views the rights of others as secondary to one’s own. What God wants to do is to restore proper family love and a mutual respect for one another.

When we think of the subject of respect or lack of it in relation to the family, we usually think of it in terms of children respect for their parents. But in my thinking, a child’s respect level for their parents is only the fruit of the relationship that parents have with them. Children tend to reflect back to the parents how they have been treated by their parents. If parents have little or no respect for their children, the children will have little or no respect for their parents.

One of the things that the Gospel does is to restore man to a place of dignity and respect as a special creation of God made in His image and likeness.

I. What are some important words that serve as a basis for mutual family respect?

A. There are some English words that relate to this area of respect.

1. Respect (Rom. 12:10)

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another...

Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. –NLT

Honor one another above yourselves. – NIV

Meaning: A just regard for and appreciation of worth; honor and esteem; courteous regard.

2. Esteem (Phil. 2:3-4)

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Meaning: To value highly; regard as having worth or excellence

We did not have children out of selfish ambition, that is, to fulfill an need within ourselves.

3. Regard (Gal. 5:13)

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Meaning: Observant attention or notice; heed; consideration

4. Recognition (I Cor. 12:20-27)

But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

Meaning: "Acknowledgement of the validity of something; an indication of appreciation or approval of; formal approval; a regard for the genuineness of something."

Every person has significance in the Body of Christ. This includes children. We cannot say that we "have no need of you." Children are real people too and members of the Body of Christ.

5. Dignity (I Pet. 2:17)

Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Show proper respect to everyone. – NIV

Treat everyone you meet with dignity. –MSG

Meaning: "The state or quality of being excellent, worthy or honorable"

B. There are some Hebrew and Greek words that apply to this area of respect.

1. The Hebrew word used in the Old Testament for "honor" means to treat something as "precious or costly." This would be to treat as a precious vessel or possession.
2. The Greek word used in the New Testament for "honor" relates directly to how much worth or value that something is seen to have. It is the legal appraisal (Acts 19:19).

- a. It means to value, to show honor and to deem worthy of honor.
- b. It is most often used in relation to various leaders, officials, dignitaries or kings.

When it comes to these type of people we do not have trouble honoring them because their worth and value is obvious. A child's value to us is not as easy to see. If we are not careful we will have the attitude of the disciples when it comes to children (Mt. 19:13-15).

Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.

II. What is the value or worth of a child?

A. Sometimes it is difficult to see the value of a child. Why?

1. Because of their small size.
2. Because of their limited knowledge.
3. Because of their candid and at times irritating questions.
4. Because children seem to have nothing to offer—immediately.
5. Because they do not contribute anything to their support.
6. Because they can embarrass us at times.
7. Because of the way we were treated as a child.
8. Because they do not measure up to our expectations (mentally challenged or physically disabled).

B. Things that we value we treat with great respect and regard.

This leads to a whole discussion of "value" and "worth." If we value...

1. An automobile, it means that we take extra good care of it. We make sure we keep it up and we park it where it will not get damaged.
2. A public official, it means that we watch them attentively and are careful and discerning in their presence.
3. An heirloom, it means that we treat it as a special, private possession with dignity and honor giving it special protection and care and a place of honor in our home. What happens when a child damages a special possession (Ill. The Tiffany Lamps).

When it comes to values, it is very easy to give major attention to minor matters and minor attention to major matters.

C. The world has one view of children.

While not every one feels this way there are many voices out there who are represented in the following views.

1. They are in the way.
2. They tie me down.
3. They are a messy nuisance.
4. They are keeping me from pursuing my career goals.
5. They are an interruption in my life. Day care centers are full of interruptions.

D. God has another view of children.

1. Children are valid members of the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:14-21). As such they are due the same regard as any brother or sister in Christ.
2. Children are a significant blessing above all other (Gen. 17:16; 28:3; Ps. 107:38; 128:3).

And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.

Genesis 17:16

3. Children are a gracious gift from God (Gen 33:4-5).

But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, "Who are these with you?" So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."

4. Children are the inheritance of the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5).

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

5. Children are the reward of the Lord (Ps. 127:3).
6. Children are cause for great happiness (Ps. 127:5). This is where the expression came from "the more the merrier."

III. How are parents to treat their children respectfully?

The power of the Gospel is to restore or to put things back into proper order. If parents are to treat their children respectfully they must:

A. Change the way they see their children.

1. Children are like banks into which I can invest my saving for a future return.
2. Children are like tender shoots that when properly cultivated and watered will produce wonderful fruit.

“Every child born into the world is a new thought of God, and ever fresh and radiant possibility.” -- Unknown

What has more value? A car that is brand new or one that is half used up? What about a life?

It is interesting that when it comes to material possessions we tend to place the most value on things that are brand new or extremely old. When it comes to people we tend to do the opposite. Children are brushed off along with the aged.

B. Honor them in the way that they present them to the public.

Honor among the Greeks was not just a mental image, but it was directly related or connected to material goods. It was a measurable commodity. You could determine the amount of honor by the specific acts that demonstrated that honor. Those you honor you lavish yourself upon.

Many parents show a lack of honor in relation to their children by the way they let them interface with the public. This includes:

1. Letting them go outside without proper clothing.
2. Letting them go out in public with dirty faces, hands and hair.
3. Making them wear torn or ragged clothing.
4. Not being concerned about ironed or clean school uniforms.

The truth is that you would never go out that way but you would let your children go out that way. All of these things speak something of honor.

It is interesting that in the Greek mind, the admonition or “Honor your father and mother” carried with it the implication of financial support of parents in need. Many children have no honor for their parents when they are old because the parents had no honor for the children when they were young.

C. Treat them the way they would want to be treated.

1. Look at them when you speak to them.
2. Take the time to talk to them when they want to talk to you.
3. Respect their desires when planning family activities.

4. Do not speak to them in harsh or negative ways.

General Rule: If the pitch goes up, it is uplifting. If the pitch goes down it is degrading.

Example: “Hurry up! We only have 10 minutes!”

- a. Avoid scolding or verbal torture.
- b. Avoid sarcasm.
- c. Be courteous (“Let’s be quiet now” not “Shut up.”)
- d. Give commands in an uplifting way.

5. Do not use embarrassment to adjust or correct them.
6. Allow them to express their opinions freely in family discussions.
7. Do not label them with negative nicknames (Shy One, Cranky One, Wild One, Hyperactive, Etc.) or use name calling (Idiot, Dummy, Stupid).
8. Never refer to children in general negative terms (Brats, Rug Rats, Etc.).

Watch all non-verbal cues that express the same negative emotion.

- a. Never use sighs to express disgust. A sigh says:
 - I am disgusted with you.
 - You are making me upset.
 - You are really stupid.
 - Don’t you know anything?
 - You can’t do anything right.
 - You are a bother to me.
 - b. Never use improper looks to express anger instead catch their eye in a positive manner. This includes rolling the eyes, starring down, etc.
9. Be free to express affection for the child in words and deeds. Tell them everyday that you love them. Hug and kiss them often.
 10. Never laugh at the child. Laugh with them.

Don’t make fun of their best efforts to please you, their physical attributes or an embarrassing situation. Be sure to laugh at all of their jokes no matter how unfunny that they may be.

11. Be careful never to show favoritism among children. You will naturally be drawn to one child more than another. But each child must be treated as special (Deut. 21:15-17).

Ask yourself:

- Do I address one more than another?
- Do I ask one to do more with me than another?
- Do I greet one with more enthusiasm than another?
- Do I make a bigger fuss over one report card than another?
- Do I give gifts of equal value (Greek culture)?

Sometimes you will have to work with babysitters, grandparents, relatives and friends who might tend to go overboard with one child and nearly ignore the other.

12. Be careful not to compare them with others. Each child is different. Your job is to celebrate the difference and try to bring out the unique qualities of each one.
13. Do not over-react to the things that they say and do. Be careful to guard your reactions to things that they say and do.

When others are around it is easy to get nervous about the way they are behaving. So instead of thinking what would be in the best interest of the child at that moment, it is easy to think of how to save face or reputation. We may feel personally offended. We need to relax, consider the needs of the child and deal with the situation in an appropriate way.

Some situations in which we might over-react include:

- a. When children do the unexpected we can over-react (Playing doctor, coming into the room with no clothes on, etc.).
- b. When a child comes in at an inconvenient time we can be short with them.
- c. When they come home from school and they have forgotten something or they have to serve a detention.

Harshness can wound the spirit of a child. It will cause them to want to escape which is manifest by withdrawing or becoming really quiet (Pro. 18:14).

Most of the time we over-react because of self-centeredness, tiredness or busyness. Perhaps our life is out of balance. Parents must learn to control their own spirit (Pro. 16:32; 14:17).

14. Never demean your child when talking about them to others, especially in their presence. Talking over them as if they cannot hear.
 - “I never had one like this before.”
 - “This one really taxes me.”

15. Avoid all unbiblical forms of discipline. Even in discipline you want to handle it with dignity.

No slapping, pulling ears or hair, jerking, shaking, lifting them suddenly off of the floor, grabbing suddenly, squeezing arms too tight, pinching, setting down too hard, biting or any other eye-for-an-eye method.

16. Be eager to apologize and ask forgiveness as you would any other adult.

Your children know when you are wrong. If you do not show them how to apologize you will teach them to justify themselves by excuses.

17. Take them seriously when they express concerns.

If they are afraid of the dark or are having scary dreams, take them seriously.

18. Show genuine interest in the things that are part of their lives (e.g. problems, friends, hurts, failures, sports, victories, hobbies and interests).
19. Show appreciation when they make efforts to please them.

20. Praise them often.
21. Pay prompt and cheerful attention to their needs from diapering to doctoring.
22. Keep your words and promises to them!

In a survey of prostitutes one of the few common denominators was resentment toward their father for broken promises.

IV. What are some symptoms in children that might be reflect a need in this area?

While many of the following symptoms can arise from other sources, dishonoring our children can produce them as well.

- Bedwetting
- Bad dreams
- Security blanket
- Extensive thumb sucking
- Avoidance of eye contact
- Wounded spirit
- Extensive shyness
- Indecisiveness
- Inability to be free around adults
- Low self-image
- Tendency toward melancholy (Pro. 15:13)

As parents we need to repent and do what God would do in these areas. Do not expect changes overnight, but as you sow new seed you will surely reap a new crop.

Lesson 13-14 Child Discipline

I. Where do we have the pattern for all discipline?

God Himself, as our Heavenly Father, furnishes the best and primary example of all discipline (Deut 8:5).

You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.

- A. God chastens His children out of love (Pro. 3:11-12; 13:24; Heb. 12:5-6; Rev. 3:19).

My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.

Proverbs 3:11-12

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Revelation 3:19

- B. God chastens because He is faithful to us (Ps. 119:75).

I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

- C. God chastens as a form of instruction (Ps. 94:12, NIV; Ps. 119:71).

Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law.

Psalm 94:12, NIV

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.

Psalm 119:71

- D. God chastens but afterward re-establishes His love to us (Job 5:18; Jer. 31:18-20; Ps. 89:32-33).

For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole. Job 5:18

II. Why should parents discipline their children?

- A. They should **not** discipline them because:

1. Their children frustrate or irritate them.

If you wait for this to happen it will be too late for proper discipline. Most of the time frustration and irritation come after your child has misbehaved and not responded to your repeated instructions. In most cases they should already have experienced discipline. They should be disciplined for disobedience the first time they disobey, not after their disobedience gets wearisome.

2. They are angry or upset.

Often times we are angry because of what we perceive to be a violation of our person. In other words, we take the disobedience personally. Often times the root cause for our anger stems from selfishness on our part. We are disciplining because:

- a. They broke something that we treasured.
- b. They spoiled our leisure time.
- c. They “ruined” our evening.
- d. They embarrassed us in front of guests.
- e. They made our work load greater.

If we discipline in this case we will not be just in our judgment and we will not be in a good position to train our children. It may be “punishment” instead of training. It may be anger instead of love. If you sense that you are angry, it would be better not to discipline than to go forward in anger.

3. They want to be seen or acknowledged as a model family.

Sometimes we can be exercising discipline with our children because of something that we want for ourselves.

- a. We want a good reputation.
- b. We want to qualify as a leader (I Tim. 3:4).
- c. We want to be seen as a good Christian.

It is true that unruly children will mar your reputation. It is true that unruly children will keep you out of church leadership. It is true that godly children should characterize the Christian lifestyle, but it is also true that your children are not stepping stones to your ministry or career goals.

B. They should discipline their children because:

1. God commands them to.

This immediately takes it out of the realm of emotion and puts it into the realm of obedience. In fact, if I do not restrain my children, God will most likely deal with me (I Sam. 3:13). Notice that God held Eli accountable for his children, not Mrs. Eli.

For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.

I have warned him continually that judgment is coming for his family, because his sons are blaspheming God and he hasn't disciplined them. –NLT

The children that I have been given are a trust or stewardship from God. I will have to give God account for what I have done with them.

2. Their children need it (Ps. 119:75, NLT).

I know, O LORD, that your decisions are fair; you disciplined me because I needed it.

We will talk about this more later, but suffice it to say that every child born into the world needs discipline. Without discipline they will bring their parents to shame—every time (Pro. 29:15).

The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

To discipline and reprimand a child produces wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by an undisciplined child. –NLT

Wise discipline imparts wisdom; spoiled adolescents embarrass their parents. –MSG

3. They love their children (Pro. 13:24).

He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

God loves us so much that He is willing to get personally involved in our betterment by chastening us even when it is easier not to do so. He does not do it because He wants to hurt us, but because He wants to see us prosper. Parents who do not discipline their children are not neglecting to do so because they just “love them so much.” The Bible says that if they neglect to do so they actually “hate” their child.

Only this kind of love will produce the desired results. Love and discipline go hand in hand. Love and discipline must be balanced in their application in the lives of our children.

III. What are we seeking to instill into the loves of our children?

While there are many individual things that we want to build into the lives of our children through discipline, there are three main things that we are trying to instill in them.

A. A fear of God (Pro. 23:13-14)

Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell.

Don't fail to correct your children. They won't die if you spank them. Physical discipline may well save them from death. –NLT

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Part of building into our children a fear of the Lord is to help them to develop a godly respect for authority. How you teach them to respond to you is how they will most likely respond to the Lord and other authorities in their life.

III. I sometimes think that Peter's mother trained him to respond to the third time (See: Acts 10:16). Jessi on swing.

B. Self control (Pro. 25:28)

Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.

Children do not have to be ruled by their emotions and impulses. The wisdom of the world says, "Let it all out." God wants us to be under control—His control. You can teach your children to control themselves and to live a life based on the principles of God's word.

C. Respect for others (Phil. 2:3-8, NLT)

Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. 4 Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing. 5 Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. 6 Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. 7 He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. 8 And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross.

Children need to learn compassion, sharing, giving to others, consideration, good manners that they might be better prepared for the work of ministry that God has for them. All ministry will come out of a servant's heart.

IV. What are some keys to effective discipline?

A. Consistency

Consistency is perhaps the most important aspect of discipline and, at the same time, the most difficult aspect of discipline. Consistency in discipline is the same thing as faithfulness in discipline (Ps. 119:75). It means that we must be faithful to discipline on all occasions where discipline is needed.

1. This means when you are away from home.
2. This means when you are tired.
3. This means when everyone is having a good time.
4. This means when you are watching a favorite show or movie.
5. This means when you think their disobedience is "cute."

B. Respect

We talked a lot about respect for our children in Lesson 12. When we discipline our children we must show them respect as people while we are doing it.

1. This means that we do not demean the child or use embarrassment to correct.
2. This means that we do not discipline in public (including in front of their siblings). We take them aside.
3. This means that we do not talk down to them, scold them, belittle them or call them names. This will only produce a poor self image and will cause them to cower in the presence of adults.
4. This means that we avoid all unbiblical forms of discipline as discussed in the previous lesson.

C. Balance (Ps. 85:10)

Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed.

Mercy and truth must be a part of the discipline process in just the right balance.

1. Too much mercy will produce carelessness, presumption and low personal standards.
2. Too much truth (or law) will produce bitterness. Bitterness will ultimately lead to a rebellion against authority.

Love and discipline must flow together. If you must err, err on the mercy side. Even God punishes us less than our sins deserve.

D. Follow through

Training is not a one time experience. It involves seeing things through to completion. It is important that when you give instructions or commands that there is follow through or accountability.

1. Do not threaten unless you are prepared to follow through.
2. Do not make rules that you are not prepared to enforce.
3. Understand that all disobedience must be treated the same. If discipline is ever “harsher,” it should be harsher for offenses that put their life or the lives of others in jeopardy.

V. What will discipline do for my children?

- A. It will keep them from going astray (Ps. 119:67; Pro. 22:6).

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word. Psalm 119:67

I used to wander off until you disciplined me; but now I closely follow your word.
–NLT

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

- B. It will save them from hell and from the calamity of the wicked (Ps. 94:12-13; Pro. 23:14; I Cor. 11:32).

When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. I Corinthians 11:32

- C. It will lead them to a right relationship to God (Is. 26:16, Samuel).

LORD, in trouble they have visited You, they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them.

- D. It will make them wise (Pro. 22:15)

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.

- E. It will help them to enjoy life more fully (Heb. 12:9-11)

Since we respect our earthly fathers who disciplined us, should we not all the more cheerfully submit to the discipline of our heavenly Father and live forever? For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always right and good for us because it means we will share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening--it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. –NLT

- F. It will produce righteousness and holiness in them (Heb. 12:9-12).

- G. It will make them confident and secure. They will know their boundaries and find freedom in that (John 8:32, 36).

- H. It will make their lives fruitful (John 15:2).

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

Ultimately we want our children to fulfill their God-ordained destiny. They will not be able to do this without our help.

VI. Why is the disciplining of children necessary?

- A. Children are born in sin and naturally gravitate toward the exercise of self-will (Ps. 51:5; Eph. 2:3; Pro. 22:15). Yes that cute little bundle of joy is a born sinner!

For I was born a sinner--yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

Psalm 51:5, NLT

[We] were by nature children of wrath... Ephesians 2:3b

- B. Children do not know that which is right (Jer. 10:23-24).

O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O LORD, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.

- C. Children left to themselves will not fulfill God's purpose in their lives but they will bring their parents to shame (Pro. 29:15).
- D. Children who have learned through discipline to respond to authorities in their lives will also respond to the voice of the Lord (Pro. 23:14).

VII. What is the godly prescription for discipline in the home?

- A. Make sure that you understand the importance of discipline (Pro. 29:15; 22:15; 20:11). Without it we have no guarantee as to what our children will become.
- B. Make sure that your discipline is motivated by love and genuine concern for the child. Your constant concern should be, "Am I doing what is best for my child."
- C. Make sure that you have laid the proper groundwork for discipline. Before correcting a child ask yourself the following questions:

1. Have I ever told him not to do it or what to do in this situation?

We must teach our children what to expect. They must have truth to draw upon. We cannot assume that they should "know better" unless we have been specific with them in this area. Do not wait for wrong behavior to manifest before teaching right behavior.

2. If you have told him, was your instruction clear?

It must be clear to them not just to you. It is good to have them repeat your instructions back to you so that you can ascertain whether or not they really understand your instructions.

3. Is your request reasonable? Are they able to handle what you have asked?

If the request is unreasonable or over their heads in terms of their ability to do what is being asked of them, they may not be rebellious when they do not do what is asked. You must try to determine if your child's behavior is the result of him being childish or rebellious?

4. Is his behavior reflecting back to me that I have been inconsistent or unfair?

Children must know their boundaries. If you have let a particular offense go for the last number of times, you cannot all of a sudden start enforcing discipline for that offense. Their disobedience is actually the result of your being inconsistent. Before you can begin to reinforce this area you must apologize to your child for your lack of consistency and warn them that things are changing.

D. Make sure that you follow certain basic guidelines.

1. Be in agreement with your spouse before you discipline.

It is better to be wrong and be in agreement, than to proceed without agreement. If you do not agree the children will learn how to play one parent against the other and soon it will damage the relationship of mother and father.

2. Teach them that “no” means “no”. This means correcting them early (Pro. 13:24, NLT).

If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them. –NLT

John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible states that this verse can mean three things:

- In the morning, that is, in the morning of his infancy, before vicious habits are contracted, or he is accustomed to sinning, and hardened in it.
 - As soon as the crime is perpetrated before it is forgot or repeated.
 - Every morning, that is, continually, as often as it is necessary.
- a. This means that you discipline them for all disobedience the first time.
 - b. This means that you do not continually warn them.

At the most you should warn them once and that is only when you are uncertain as to whether or not they have understood or heard your command.

- c. This means that you do not threaten your children especially with things that you have no intention of doing. If you don't stop doing that I am going to:
 - Break your neck.
 - Send you to bed without supper.
 - Take away your favorite toy.
 - Slap you silly.
 - Never give you ice cream again.

All that these threats accomplish is to put the child under a cloud of heaviness.

3. Never raise your voice in instruction or command.

Remember, you are teaching them that “no” means “no.” Commands do not have to get to a certain decibel level to have power. You are training them to respond to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. If you are loud you will create loud children as opposed to calm children.

4. Establish the child’s personal responsibility. Have them tell you what they did wrong.

Here you are trying to help your children come to a place of repentance.

- a. Don’t ask, “Did you do that?” You are giving them the opportunity to lie. Now you have two sins with which to deal.
 - b. Don’t ask, “Why did you do that?” You are giving them an opportunity to make up an excuse. Now you will have to judge the excuse. The truth is that there is no excuse for disobedience.
 - c. Do ask, “What did you do that was wrong?” Now you are giving them an opportunity to confess and at the same time you are reinforcing the original instruction.
5. Explain again to the child the reason for discipline. Here you can reinforce the importance of rules and the reason behind the rules.
 6. Before you correct them, sit in silence for a **few seconds** for their personal reflection.

If you rush the discipline you communicate non-verbally the idea that you cannot wait to spank them.

7. Correct with a rod, a neutral object (Pro. 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; 23:13-14). Remember, spanking is meant to be a negative experience (Heb. 12:11).
 - a. Never use your hand. You use your hands to show love. If you use a small stick, your children will take their animosity out on the stick, not on you.
 - b. Never use the “eye for the eye” method (biting, pinching, pulling hair, scratching, slapping, etc.),
8. Apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge.

God has provided the perfect place to administer discipline to avoid injury to the child. In addition, they do not have to look at your face when you are

administering discipline. Never hit your child in the face, on the hands or anywhere else on the body.

9. Correct firmly and do not let his or her crying stop you (Pro. 19:18; 20:30).

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare [ease up] for his crying. –KJV

Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, as do stripes the inner depths of the heart.
Proverbs 20:30

Physical punishment cleanses away evil; such discipline purifies the heart.
–NLT

If the child can get out of discipline by crying or by throwing some other kind of tantrum, you will see a magnificent display of this type of behavior. The child must associate wrong doing with pain.

10. Do not overcorrect – no more than is necessary.

Firm spankings and consistency break the will, not the length of the spanking. I do not agree with those who say that you should continue the spanking until you hear a “soft cry.” I think you can break a child’s spirit. I do think that you should set for yourself an actual number of times that you strike the child when you spank (5-8 times).

11. Show love afterward without nullifying discipline.

This is a most important part of the discipline. You need to assure the child that you love them, but that you do not love disobedience or bad behavior. They need to know that we love them unconditionally. In affirming your love to them, do not say, “It’s alright!” Because disobedience is not alright.

12. Do not degrade the child; encourage him or her in right behavior patterns.

You want them to go away from this experience still believing that they are loved, that they are valuable and that they can make something out of themselves. At the same time, you want them to go away with a re-affirmation of the truth.

13. Pray with your child and help him or her to pray for forgiveness.

The child needs to understand that they have not just offended or sinned against you, they have sinned against God. They need to ask for forgiveness from all offended parties. This will help build into them a God consciousness that will serve them for the rest of their life.

14. If there is a need for restitution, have the child do it.

Now they need to return to the “scene of the crime.” They need to follow through on the original instruction, apologize to offended parties, replace what was damaged or give back what was taken. Repentance is not complete until this step is taken.

15. Be consistent!

All of this takes time. If your children are not the priorities in your life you will not want to take the time needed to do this the right way.

If you have not been following this process in relationship to the discipline of your children, you have to ease into it. Especially if you have older children, you need to tell them what is going to happen and why. You may need to give them a practice week with warnings instead of the real thing so they can get used to the new order of things.

VIII. When should discipline start?

Child discipline should start very early. It should start as soon as there is an obvious manifestation of their will against your will (Pro. 19:18, NLT). However, it is important that the age of the child be considered in relation to the severity of the discipline.

Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives.

IX. What are some additional guidelines that would apply to older children?

There is a time when older children are too big to spank. Some of the following guidelines may be helpful.

A. Discipline by the removal of certain privileges.

1. They can forfeit their cell phone.
2. They can be given extra jobs.
3. They can be grounded.
4. They can lose TV privileges.
5. **Never** take them out of church activities as a means of discipline.

B. Provide additional motivation by rewarding correct behavior.

1. Allow them special privileges.
2. Give them more freedom and/or responsibility.

C. Take time for heart-to-heart communication.

At some point your relationship with your child will have more power than anything else in their life. If there is no relationship between the child and the parent, time must be given to the development of that relationship. This is particularly true when the parents are in fact step-parents.

1. Spend time in developing a good relationship.
2. Be sure to express displeasure in wrong behavior.
3. Be sure to express praise for right behavior.

God has given a tremendous promise to those who train up their child after a godly manner (Proverbs 22:6).

Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it. – NLT

Note: Some of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

Susannah's Rules for Rearing Children

Susannah Wesley, mother of nineteen, didn't go to textbooks for her theories on child guidance. Though two hundred years old, her rules are still valid today for teaching a child to be obedient.

1. Allow no eating between meals.
2. Put all children in bed by eight o'clock.
3. Require them to take medicine without complaining.
4. Subdue self-will in a child and thus work together with God to save his soul.
5. Teach each one to pray as soon as he can speak.
6. Require all to be still during family worship.
7. Give them nothing that they cry for, and only that which they ask for.
8. To prevent lying, punish no fault which is first confessed and repented of.
9. Never allow a sinful act to go unpunished.
10. Never punish a child twice for a single offense.
11. Commend and reward good behavior.
12. Any attempt to please, even if poorly performed, should be commended.
13. Preserve property rights, even in the smallest matters.
14. Strictly observe all promises.
15. Teach children to fear the rod.

Lesson 15

The Atmosphere of the Home

I. How important is one's spiritual environment?

How important is one's atmosphere or environment? Over a century ago a man by the name of Charles Darwin began to promote the concept that environment has a great deal to do with how living things grow and develop. While his theory of evolution that came forth from this observation is seriously flawed, it has to be said that, at least in this one area, he had a worthy thought.

This concept was later picked up by many of the early psychologists who developed a whole system around the idea that people are shaped and molded to a great extent by their surroundings or their environment. The failure of psychology or psychiatry is not in the promotion of this concept, but rather in how they deal with the problems that are detected in people. People's behavior is affected by their environment. They will either be affected in a negative way or in a positive way.

- A. The spiritual atmosphere or environment can make a good man bad (I Kings 11:1-6).

But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites-- 2 from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David.

Solomon was a good man who had made many right choices in his life. He had opted for wisdom over so many other things. However, when he rejected his own wisdom and surrounded himself with ungodly women, his heart was turned against the Lord. The good man became an evil man.

- B. The spiritual atmosphere or environment can make a bad man good (I Samuel 19:18-24).

So David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth. 19 Now it was told Saul, saying, "Take note, David is at Naioth in Ramah!" 20 Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. 21 And when Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. Then Saul sent

messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. 22 Then he also went to Ramah, and came to the great well that is at Sechu. So he asked, and said, "Where are Samuel and David?" And someone said, "Indeed they are at Naioth in Ramah." 23 So he went there to Naioth in Ramah. Then the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Saul was a king who was not known for his heart toward God. In his life as the king of Israel he rarely sought the Lord for direction. However, when he and his servants got into the environment of worship and prophetic anointing, they all prophesied as one of the prophets. This spiritual atmosphere had a positive affect on a "not-so-spiritual" man.

II. How important is environment in the natural realm?

A. On the negative side

1. If the environment is filled with pollution things will be negatively affected.
 - a. Plant life will be sickly and spotted.
 - b. Buildings will be dingy in appearance.
 - c. Human performance will be diminished.

When the Olympic Games were held in Mexico City in 1968 and in Los Angeles 1984, the media reported that they did not expect many world records to be met or set because of the air pollution in those cities—some of the worst in the world.

2. If the environment is filled with disorder it will tend to disorder.
 - a. Rock Concerts. The environment can change people's behavior. Otherwise normal young people have been known to trample one another to death in the frenzied environment.
 - b. Taverns. Taverns and other drinking establishment can perpetuate negative behavior in those who frequent them.
 - c. Night Clubs. The night club environment can cause otherwise moral and conservative people to throw off restraint and become immoral in their behavior.
 - d. People who live in an atmosphere of fear have great fears.
 - e. An environment of disorder produces disorder. Sometimes you have to clean up the disorder if you are going to get anything done. Ill. My wife and the kitchen.

B. On the positive side

1. If the environment is guarded and controlled it can have a very positive effect.

The whole concept of a greenhouse is that of controlling the environmental factors that go to the production of plants. In the greenhouse these plants are not subject to chance. When the external factors are properly controlled, you get the best possible result.

- a. Greenhouse plants tend to grow more quickly.
- b. Greenhouse plants tend to be stronger and heartier.
- c. Greenhouse plants tend to bring forth more fruit.
- d. Greenhouse plants can bear fruit in all seasons.
- e. Greenhouse plants do extremely well when transplanted outside of the greenhouse.

2. If the environment is one of peace the result is peace.

In some work with plants they have shown that the kind of music that is played in a greenhouse can affect the way plants grow. Playing mellow music is to be preferred over loud, chaotic music. The same principle has been demonstrated in factories and shopping malls.

III. What are the things that affect the environment of the home?

The same principle of environment that is seen in the natural realm is seen in the home. What is the atmosphere of your home? Is it one that is controlled? Is it one that is producing kingdom fruit (righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost)? Or is it oppressive? Is it chaotic?

The fact is that your children up to the age of 18 will spend over 65% of their time in their home environment. The environment of the home will have more affect on them than any other factor in their growth and development. You see people learn what they live.

Learning from Living

If a child lives with criticism
He learns to condemn;
If a child learns with hostility
He learns to fight;
If a child lives with ridicule
He learns to be shy;
If a child lives with shame
He learns to feel guilty.

BUT

If a child lives with tolerance
He learns to be patient;

If a child lives with encouragement
He learns confidence;
If a child lives with praise
He learns to appreciate;
If a child lives with security
He learns to have faith;
If a child lives with approval
He learns to like himself;
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship
He learns to find LOVE in the world!
- Dorothy Lawe Holt

What is your child living with?

There are ten things that have a major affect on the atmosphere of your home.

A. Music

What kind of music is played in the home and from which quarters? Does each bedroom emit a different sound? Is it music that feeds your spirit or your flesh? Does it create a mood of peace? Invest in a good stereo and good music that can fill the atmosphere of your home. If you need money—sell your TV!

B. Pictures/posters/banners

What is idolized in your home? What posters hang on the wall in your children's rooms? Scantly clad women? Modern rock stars? Movie personalities? There are so many good pictures that glorify God and his creation. Banners can testify. The Bible talks about writing the word of God on our walls and doorposts (Deut. 6:9; 11:20).

C. Games

Many games teach ungodly principles that border on witchcraft and Satanism. I am not very versed in the games of today but there are many games like Dungeons and Dragons, Ouija Boards, Séance, Lie, Cheat, Steal, etc. that are not appropriate in the Christian home. Many games are neutral (chess, checkers, Uno, etc.). Some actually are designed to teach and exalt godliness. What do your children play in their play time? What kind of video games are they playing (See list)?

D. Toys

So many of the toys in the world today are connected with alien creatures and other demonic appearing monsters. Toys take us into a world of make believe. When children play with toys they create scenarios that are associated with the nature of the toy. Is that where you want your children to live?

E. Books

While books are not very popular in today's world of electronic media, books still can have a powerful impact on the hearts and minds of your children. Even the children's books that we read to our children need to be scrutinized to see what they are teaching. Do the books that they are reading support godliness, virtue and wholesome values? Are they filled with romance that is inappropriate for their age or for Christian moral values? Do they twist the truth and promote philosophies of life that are inconsistent with the truths of the Bible? With so many good books available, we should not need to resort to the wrong material.

F. Magazines

Magazines are another thing that speaks in the home. Invest in some good magazines so that your children are paging through material that will build positive things within them.

G. Order and cleanliness

A home that is clean and orderly is a home where virtue is more easily promoted.

H. Mealtime routine

“A meal is not simply food but also the spirit in which it is eaten. Mealtime should be occasions for the happiest kind of exchanges and learning—for cheerful, not solemn, communion. A bad meal can be redeemed by good conversation, but a good meal can be irretrievably ruined by bad conversation.” – House and Garden

I. Television

Television is a marvelous invention. It has the potential of reaching the world for Christ. It can bring happenings and voices from around the world right into your living room. It has the potential for great blessing, but uncontrolled becomes the source of great evil.

Television has the awesome potential of bringing murder into the Christian home. It can bring us rape, adultery, drunkenness, cursing, immorality of every kind, nudity, rebellion, witchcraft, and violence of every description.

Read from the following articles:

At Wit's End: Instinct to feel lost in TV violence, Erma Bombeck

This is an open letter to everyone who has produced or defended violence on television.

You don't remember me, do you? I'm the viewer who used to sit in front of a TV set and when a gun was fired, I nearly jumped out of my chair. When I saw someone being beaten, instinctively I flinched and felt the pain. Or when I saw blood, I turned my head away and my stomach felt funny.

I know. I don't seem like the same person you remembered. I'm not.

You have desensitized me. During a single evening, I once saw 12 people shot to death, two people tortured (one a child), one dumped in a swimming pool, two cars explode with people in them, a rape and a man who crawled three blocks with a knife in his stomach.

And you know something? I didn't feel shock or horror. I didn't feel excitement or repugnance. I didn't feel pity or sadness. I didn't even feel anger.

The truth is, I didn't feel. And I hate you for it. Through repeated assault with one violent act after another you have taken from me something that I valued, something that contributed to my compassion and caring, the instinct to feel. You told me violence was necessary because it is "real". Throwing up is "real", but I don't want to see it in color.

You told me the 6 o'clock news was just as violent. But you forgot to mention the 6 o'clock news has conscience. Whenever violence is reported it is declared wrong and shocking.

Please know that I will survive the violence that emanates from the tube because I know what I have lost and somehow I will find my way back to what I know I should be and feel.

But reflect if you will on the children of our times, those infants with a 21-inch screen as a night light who could adjust an aerial at age four, and who consider TV their babysitter, mother, father, first date, good friend, teacher and constant dinner companion.

They have never known shock. They have never felt pain for another human being. They have never cried for a victim. They have never felt anger for injustice. Do you dare take that away from them?

Children's Aggression Linked to TV Violence

WASHINGTON (AP) – Television is "a violent form of entertainment" that clearly leads to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers, a new government study concluded Wednesday.

The National Institute of Mental Health said the evidence has mounted since a 1972 surgeon general's report first implicated television as a cause of violence by children.

"The evidence accumulated in the 1970s seems overwhelming that televised violence and aggression are positively related in children," the institute said. Despite periodic outcries from members of Congress and citizens groups, the study found no decrease in the level of violence on television.

“The percentage of programs containing violence has remained about the same since 1967, although the number of violent acts per program has increased,” it said. “Children’s shows are violent in a cyclical way, up one year and down the next.”

The 94-page report, “Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties,” was based on a two-year review of hundreds of research studies.

The report said: “Both prime time and weekend children’s television are dominated by action, power and danger. There is an average of five violent acts per hour on prime time and 18 acts per hour on children’s weekend programs. “The consensus among most of the research community is that violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch the programs,” it continued. “This conclusion is based on laboratory experiments and on field studies. Not all children become aggressive, of course.”

Among the studies cited in the report was a 1978 CBS-funded study that found “teenage boys in London, according to their own accounts of their activities, were more likely to engage in ‘serious violence’ after exposed to television violence.” It also cited two studies on preschool children by J.L. and D.G. Singer, who compared 3- and 4-year-old children’s television viewing at home with their behavior “during free-play periods at day-care centers. In each study there were consistent associations between heavy television viewing of violent programs and unwarranted aggressive behavior in their free play.”

Less TV Improves Reading, Family Communication

The students were surprised to discover how dependent they were on television, Sullivan said.

The experiment was perhaps most fruitful among families who tackled it together, some even banishing the television set to the garage for the month.

“I’d ask these kids, ‘What’d you do last night?’ and I’d hear things like, ‘We played Scrabble as a family – I can’t remember the last time we did that,’” Sullivan said.

“I think the three of us did more things together – including talking,” one parent noted.

The logs kept by the children of their activities during the contest showed increasing creativity as the month progressed. Typical entries in the first few days – such as “read a book,” “played outside,” – gave way to an occasional “went to Mom’s work with her,” “made dinner,” “helped Dad clean,” or “did Mom’s hair.” But a consistent benefit throughout the month was an increase in reading, Sullivan said. The class keeps track of the amount of books read by students via a “rocket” that moves forward across the ceiling each time a new book is completed. “It just started zooming across the room during the contest,” the teacher said.

Sullivan is so pleased with the results of the November experiment that he plans to repeat it again this spring, when daylight lasts longer and the weather is better. "I think the main thing it did was increase our awareness of the advantages of not watching television," he said. "The responses we got from the parents have indicated that maybe half of the class has continued to watch less television even after the contest ended."

It is possible to live without TV. My children lived without it for 17 years.

J. The Internet

The internet like the TV was unthinkable a few years ago. How is it all possible? What an incredible resource. But did you know that over 65% of all of the material on the internet is pornographic in nature? Children can access sites that teach you how to build bombs, commit suicide, kill someone you do not like and worse things? The chat rooms are sites for sexual predators and other revolutionaries. It is essential that children be limited in their access until they are able to handle the responsibility.

IV. What would happen if Jesus came to our house?

God is interested in our homes. He knows what an influence they will have on our children and the future of the church. He told Zachaeus, "I am going to your house today!" What would happen if Jesus came to your house today? Right now? This very minute? Would Jesus feel comfortable in your house?

If Jesus Came to Your House

If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two...
If He came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do.
Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored guest
And all the food you'd serve Him would be the very best,
And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have Him there...
But... when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door
With arms outstretched in welcome to our heavenly visitor?
Or would you maybe change your clothes before you let Him in,
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been?
Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard,
And wish you hadn't uttered that last, loud and hasty word?
Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?

And I wonder... if the Savior spent a day or two with you,
Would you go right on doing the things you always do?
Would you go right on saying the things you always say?
Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?
Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace?
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?
Would you sing the songs you always sing and read the book you always read?
And let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed
Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go,
Or would you, maybe, change your plans for just a day or so?
Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends,
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on,
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?
It might be interesting to know the things that you would do,
If Jesus came in person to spend some time with you.

- Author Unknown

If you build the right atmosphere in your home, bad kids will be good in your home.

Lesson 16

Developing the Spiritual Life of Your Children

I. What is God's desire when it comes to the spiritual life of our homes?

A. He desires to be welcomed in our homes (Luke 19:5-9).

Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. 7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." 8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

B. He is interested in salvation coming to our homes (Acts 16:30-34).

And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

C. He is interested in our homes being a miniature church.

As a miniature church, our homes should be a place of:

1. Worship
2. Prayer
3. The Word
4. Teaching
5. Body Ministry
6. Discipline
7. Covering and Protection
8. Fellowship
9. Commitment
10. Devotion to the Lord

II. What is the foundation of a good devotional life?

The foundation of a good devotional life is the personal commitment of the parents to live a life that is Christian. If Christ is not real to the parents, they will never be able to make Him real to their children. Christ must be the center of the home. The home must be a place where the principles of the kingdom operate.

Christianity and all that goes with it should be spontaneous in the home. When it is the rewards are tremendous. If Christianity is not a way of life in the home the children will be trained to be hypocritical.

III. What does the word “devotions” mean?

The word “devotions” comes from words like devote, devoted, devotee and devotion.

A. Devote

To devote is to give or apply one’s attention or time completely to some activity or purpose. It also means to set apart, dedicate or consecrate something to God.

B. Devoted

To be devoted is to be ardent, zealous or devout in adherence to something or someone.

C. Devotee

To be a devotee is to be a person who is passionate about something especially the observance of religious duty.

D. Devotion

Devotion is the state of being devoted. It is a strong attachment or affection which expresses itself in earnest service.

Every Christian home is to be a place where we give or apply ourselves to the purposes of God, setting ourselves apart to the service of the Lord and the exaltation of His kingdom.

IV. Who is responsible for the devotional life of the home?

A. The father has been placed by God as the spiritual head of the home (Eph. 5:23).

1. It is the father’s responsibility to be sure that the children are raised up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).
2. The father is the one who will be held accountable by the Lord for the spiritual state of his family (Ex. 4:24; I Sam. 3:11-13).

- B. The following are guidelines to help the father (parents) strengthen the spiritual life of the family.
1. The father must have a proper relationship to the Lord.
 2. The father must follow godly principles of child discipline in the home. If we do not follow divine principles, we cannot expect divine results.
 3. The father must be prepared to teach by example. Don't tell your children to do something that you do not do yourself. Don't tell them to not do the very things that you do.
 4. The father must make sure that the atmosphere in the home is conducive to spiritual growth (Refer to previous lesson).
 5. The father must be the initiator of spiritual enrichment in the home. Don't let this be the mother's responsibility. Different families choose different times to have family devotions depending on the ages of the children.
 6. The father must be diligent to pursue the well-being of his family members. This means the father must not be lazy in this area but should give quality time and effort to this task.
 7. The father must continually encourage his children in leadership development. Your goal is that every child will be a confident leader.
 8. The father must make time for special spiritual activities.
 9. The father must never underestimate the abilities of small children.
 - a. They can be worshippers (I Sam. 1:28; Mt. 21:15-16).
 - b. They can pray and share prayer requests.
 - c. They can share testimonies.
 - 10 The father must be creative with the methods of teaching in the home (avoid getting in a rut!). Here are only a few ideas:
 - Conversational prayer
 - Question and answer
 - Memorization
 - Devotional reading
 - Worship times
 - Story-telling
 - Acting out stories
 - Playing instruments
 - Singing
 - Sharing
 - Bible reading (simple translations)

- Testimonies
 - Praying for the sick
 - Composing songs of praise
11. The father must use every opportunity and happening in the home as a learning experience.
 - a. Interpret everything through your relationship to the Lord.
 - b. Give the Lord credit for victories.
 11. The father must seek to answer the questions of the children correctly (even if that involves research).
 13. The father must be a feeder who is sensitive to the individual needs of each of his children.
 14. The father must encourage the participation of all family members regardless of age.
 - a. No child should ever be considered too small.
 - b. Don't make excuses, exceptions or special allowance for their age (large or small).
 - c. Continually challenge them toward further expansion.
 - d. Avoid double standards among the children.
 15. The father must be a teacher who instills in his children the fear of the Lord and a respect for His Word.
 - a. Don't allow them to mock the things of God.
 - b. Instill in them a respect for His presence.
 16. The father must be sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of his child.
 17. The father must be ever prepared to lead his child to the Lord.
 18. The father must not be afraid to include visitors in the family exercises.
 19. The father must be willing and eager to seek counsel and advice from other fathers.
 20. The father must continually encourage trust in, reliance upon and an acknowledgement of the Lord in all circumstances.
 21. The father must lead the family in prayer times as the need arises.

22. The father should help to assure that the children retire with the Lord and the good things of the Lord on their hearts.

Note: Some of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

Lesson 17

Guiding Your Children to Destiny

From the day that a child first arrives in the home, parents are preparing them to leave. This will either be done by intelligent design or the lack of it. God has given every parent approximately eighteen years in which to plant in their children the wisdom, intelligence and know-how to face life in such a way that honors God, contributes to society, blesses the church, and, as a by-product, meets the deep needs of that individual. Guidance is an extremely important part of that preparation process.

I. What is guidance?

A. There are a couple of words that are important to understand.

1. Guide

- a. A guide is one who leads or directs another in his way. When people go on Safari, they want a skilled guide.
- b. A guide is something that provides a person with directional information like a signpost. Think of the various directional signs along the highway. They are designed to help you get where you want to go.
- c. A guide is one who directs a person in his conduct or course of life. This is like a guru or life coach. Parents are to be their children's guru.

2. Guidance

- a. Guidance is the act or process of leading or directing.
- b. Guidance is the process of controlling the course of a projectile by a built-in mechanism (Ps. 127:4).

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

B. Some synonyms for guidance include such words as:

1. Guide. This word usually implies assistance by means of a person with intimate knowledge of the course or way and all of its difficulties and dangers.
2. Lead. This word stresses the idea of going in advance of a person to show the way and to keep those who follow in order and under control.
3. Steer. This word stresses the guidance of a person who is able to control the factors which determine the direction of a vessel.

4. Pilot. This word implies the assistance of a competent person who is able to navigate a vessel through unknown or difficult waters, as through a long and narrow channel.

II. Why is guidance necessary?

- A. Children do not know what is right (Jer. 10:23-24).

O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O LORD, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.

- B. Children do not have the wisdom gained by the experiences of life (Pro. 4:10-12).

Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many. I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble.

- C. Children left to themselves will not make wise choices (Pro. 16:2, 25; 21:2).

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Proverbs 16:25

III. How does God give direction and guidance to His children?

The pattern for man in relation to his children is given by God in His relationship to us. There are four basic ways God has designed for His children to receive the wisdom that is necessary in order to make right choices in life.

A. Instruction

God instructed Adam and Eve giving them truth upon which to draw (Gen. 3:1-3; Pro. 1:8, 9; 4:11-13).

My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck. Proverbs 1:8-9

B. Example

God provided an example for man to follow by virtue of who He is (Ps. 23:2; II Cor. 6:17, 18).

C. Experience

God gave opportunity for Adam and Eve to learn by experience in a controlled setting (Gen. 3:1-6, 22; Gen. 30:27).

D. Failure

God used the failures of Adam and Eve to show them the cause and effect relationship of sin to the curse so that they could learn from each mistake (Gen. 3:14, 17).

IV. In what ways do parents provide counsel and guidance for their children?

A. Instruction (Pro. 5:1-2)

My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge.

Parents instruct their children on what choices are right and what choices are wrong and the divine principle that apply to those choices. They also teach them how to analyze the situation to arrive at a wise judgment in the future. This teaching should be happening at all times in the daily course of life.

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion--a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel... Proverbs 1:1-5

The Book of Proverbs is written from a father to a son and contains bits of wisdom on a variety of themes:

1. How to avoid the pitfalls of immorality and adultery.
2. How to avoid the pitfalls of alcohol and other addictions.
3. How to respond to the authorities in your life.
4. How to handle finances.
5. How to walk in honesty and integrity.
6. How to be diligent in work.
7. How to treat other people.
8. How to control the tongue.
9. How to deal tactfully with different kinds of people.
10. How to treat workers under your leadership.
11. How to set priorities in your life.
12. How to relate to the poor.
13. How to raise children.
14. How to develop the qualities of excellence, generosity and faithfulness.
15. How to make and keep friends.

B. Example

Parents also provide guidance through their own example. As the parent makes right choices children are motivated to do the same. When parents seek the counsel of others in various areas it helps the child to understand that you do not have to lean totally on your limited understanding of things. Another method of

providing guidance is by asking family members from time to time what their opinion is on matters of decision or choice. In this way you can test their thinking process when it comes to decision making.

C. Experience

Parents should provide opportunities for their children to gain from life experience by giving them the responsibility of making some of their own choices in areas of personal freedom. Discussing the results of their choices in areas such as use of finances, use of time and selection of friends, provides extremely relevant guidance that they can use in those areas the rest of their lives.

D. Failure

One of the most valuable forms of guidance a parent can share with his child is the account of some of their own personal failures in life, the results of those failures and what they have learned through them. Parents can also provide guidance by discussion of the failures of others. This kind of discussion has a biblical base since many biblical stories are of the failures of others.

1. We can learn from personal failure (Pro. 15:31).

The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise.

2. We can learn from the failure of others (Pro. 24:30-34).

I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; 31 And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. 32 When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: 33 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; 34 So shall your poverty come like a prowler, and your need like an armed man.

V. In what areas do children need guidance?

A. In social areas:

1. The selection of friends.
2. The principles of relating to people.
3. The process of mending relationships.
4. The ability to conduct oneself in various public settings.
5. The ability to solve problems.
6. The choice of a marriage partner.

B. In spiritual areas:

1. The blessing of right choices.
2. How to make the Bible relate to life.
3. The folly of wrong choices.

4. Direction in ministry involvement.
5. How to receive direction from God.
6. How to lead others into righteousness.
7. How to build a good relationship with God.

C. In personal areas:

1. The use of time.
2. How to maintain good health.
3. How to view one's self.
4. How to face fear of the future.

D. In vocational areas:

1. How to enjoy your work.
2. How to choose a career.
3. How to find a job.
4. Should I go to college, and if so, where?
5. How to discipline oneself in school or work.
6. How to avoid becoming a workaholic.

E. In moral areas:

1. How to handle thought life.
2. What sex is all about (appropriate to age-level).
3. How to recognize and avoid moral pitfalls.

F. In financial areas:

1. What place does money have in life?
2. How to spend money wisely.
3. How to save money.
4. How much to tithe.
5. How to avoid or get out of debt.
6. What to think and do about credit.
7. What charitable contributions should and should not be made.

G. In physical areas:

1. The value of recreation.
2. How to maintain self-discipline in eating habits.
3. The obvious follies of drug and alcohol abuse.

The focus of guidance in the home is on values, principles and methods. From birth to marriage the parents provide guidance as to the right value system and the specific practical steps on how to reach any valuable objective. Parents are the chief source of counsel for their children. They cannot afford to leave that responsibility to others or wait always for the child to come and ask for it.

Lesson 18

Keys to Successful Family Life

Introduction

How to Raise a Juvenile Delinquent by the Houston Police Department gives the following formula:

1. Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
2. When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he's cute. It will also encourage him to pick up cuter phrases that will blow off the top of your head later.
3. Never give him any spiritual training. Wait till he is 21 and then let him decide for himself.
4. Avoid use of the word "wrong". He may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he is being persecuted.
5. Pick up everything he leaves lying around – books, shoes, and clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility onto others.
6. Let him read any printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.
7. Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way they will not be too shocked when the home is broken up later.
8. Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?
9. Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.
10. Take his part against neighbors, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.
11. When he gets into real trouble, apologize for yourself by saying, "I never could do anything with him."
12. Prepare for a life of grief. You will be apt to have it.

I. What are some of the things that will make family life special?

A. Set Mealtimes

"If we don't take meal times seriously, we can miss out on a daily opportunity to build sound family relationship."

Families should plan on a sit down meal together at least once a day. The most likely options for this would be breakfast or dinner.

1. Children can help get things ready for the meal.
 - a. Setting table and cleaning up afterwards.
 - b. Helping with the meal preparation.
2. You should begin your meals with prayer.

Different members of the family can pray over the meal. Encourage them to pray genuine prayers not form prayers. The emphasis of these prayers should be thanksgiving.

3. You should consciously engage in conversation that builds.
 - a. It is not a time to talk about matters of discipline.
 - b. It is not a time to discuss all of the bad news of the day.
 - c. It is not a time for squabbling between mom and dad.
 - d. It is not a time for the latest gossip.
 - e. It is a time to affirm and fellowship with one another.

On Sunday's you could talk about the message at church. Just avoid having "preacher" for dinner.

Question: What good thing happened to you today?

4. You should eliminate distractions at mealtimes.
 - a. TV
 - b. Phone conversations
 - c. Newspapers and other reading material.

B. Set Schedule

Routines make for a peaceful family life.

1. Bedtimes

All members of the family should be getting adequate sleep. This will have a major impact on attitudes and activities in the home.

2. Devotional Times

If we do not plan these times, they simply will not happen.

3. Mealtimes

The more consistent and routine we can be in the area of mealtimes, the more pleasant that these times will be.

4. Church Attendance

Church attendance should be a priority in your home or it will never be a priority in the lives of your children.

5. Family Night

It is a good idea to set one night of the week aside for “Family Night” where everyone knows that nothing else can be scheduled. This is a time to do something special as a family.

- Playing Board Games
- Working a Puzzle
- Going out for Ice Cream
- Working on a Family Project
- Going on a Bike Ride
- Going on a Picnic
- Going to a Playground
- Etc.

C. Family Vacations

When God set up the system for living under the Mosaic law, he provided for a type of family vacation. Three times a year there were religious feasts to be held in Jerusalem where all of the males were to come up to appear before the Lord. It is clear from the Bible that it was their common practice that the whole family would come and feast together (Luke 2:41-42). Most of these feasts lasted at least a week. They were actually to set aside an extra tithe of their finances so that when these occasions took place they would have the money that they needed to do it.

1. A Regular Time

Each family should plan at least one extended vacation each year with the whole family. It should be something that the children can look forward to. Half of the fun is the anticipation of the event. It should be planned according to the ages of your children.

2. A Planned Time

- a. The money should be set aside.
- b. The date should be set aside.
- c. The arrangements should be made well in advance.
- d. Work arrangements should be taken care of.
- e. The activities should be planned (within reason).

The key to success in this area is maintaining a balance between planning and spontaneity. In this case, the schedule is made to be broken.

3. A Time of Freedom (Deut. 14:26)

- a. This means spending outside of the normal limits.

Normally we are to be frugal and wise in the use of our finances. But at set times God said that “you may spend your money for whatever you appetite craves... or whatever you desire” (Deut. 14:26, Amp.). God is saying “Enjoy yourselves!” This is a time that you cannot always be thinking about how much something costs. God was saying, “You have saved your money all year long, now relax and have a good time with it.”

- b. This means doing some wild and crazy things.

- c. This means not taking work with you on the “vacation.”

4. A Time of Rejoicing (Lev. 23:40; Deut. 14:26)

The Feast of Tabernacles was to be “a joyous celebration, and no heavy work is permitted” (Lev. 23:36, Living Bible).

- a. This means just having fun.

- b. This means trying to plan something that minimizes work for everyone
...especially mom.

- c. This means building some happy memories as a family.

5. A Time of Sacrifice (Lev. 23:37-39)

This is still a time of worship before the Lord.

- a. This means that we do not lower our standards as Christians.

- b. This means that we maintain our spiritual momentum.

- c. This means that we make the Lord a priority.

6. A Time of Travel (Lev. 23:42)

This is a tremendous time to change the normal scenery. For the children of Israel this meant packing, leaving the conveniences of home and putting up their tent. But the doing of it united the family, gave the children a better understanding of their national roots, provided an atmosphere of learning and gave everyone a renewed appreciation for the wonderful works of the Lord.

E. Company/Guests

Having other families in you home can be a great blessing and can teach your children how to be hospitable.

1. They can learn how to be mannerly.

2. They can learn how to serve others.
3. They can learn how to minister to others spiritually.
4. They can learn how to share with others.

F. Family Outings

Parents need to give some creative energy to doing things as a family or even with other families. Television should be seen as a “last resort” for entertainment.

G. Birthdays

Making birthdays special is a great way to affirm the uniqueness of each child. Make sure on all gift giving occasions to give your children equal gifts. You might also consider giving the siblings of the birthday boy or girl something small as well to minimize jealousy.

H. Holidays

Establish some traditions around certain special holidays.

II. What can I do to be sure that I turn out terrific kids?

The following is taken from an article in *Vibrant Life* (Jan.-Feb. 1985) by Ray Maloney.

1. Love them.
2. Build their self-esteem.
3. Challenge them.
4. Listen to them.
5. Expect respect.
6. Limit them.
7. Make God a part of their lives.
8. Develop a love of learning.
9. Help them to be community minded.\
10. Let them go.

III. What would I do differently, if I had it to do over?

Here is how some people answered that question (taken from *Home Life*, August, 1982, by Frances Simpson).

If I could do it over again...

1. I'd take more time to listen to my children.
2. I'd work more with my children and let them work with me.
3. I'd be more sensitive to the feelings and moods of my children.
4. I'd brag to others less about my children and encourage them more.
5. I'd be more consistent in what I required of my children and more firm in seeing it carried out.
6. I'd linger a little longer.
7. I'd smile more and frown less.

Unfortunately we cannot "do it over." That is why it is important to make our adjustments now, so that we do not have to live in regret.

Closing this Session

Pray for the parents.

HOW DO YOU RATE IN THE HOME

The home which is based on the biblical concepts contained in this article will withstand all of Satan's attacks upon it. Take a few moments of your time for this spiritual check-up. You will find it most rewarding.

THE IDEAL CHRISTIAN HOME

The Relationship of Husband and Wife, I Peter 3:7

1. Are we making ourselves worthy of respect from the other mate?
2. Are we kind and forbearing to one another?
3. Do we settle disagreements privately with children not around?
4. Do we really make Christ the Lord of our home?
5. Do we encourage self-restraint and good manners in the home?
6. Is the wife submissive to the husband?
7. Does the husband lead the home in spiritual matters?

The Devotional Life, Colossians 3:16

8. Do we pray often and earnestly for each other?
9. Do we have prayer at each meal?
10. Do we observe family worship at least once a day?

11. Do husband and wife have a time of private devotion daily?
12. Do we sing hymns in the home?
13. Do we pray with the children and teach them to pray?
14. Do we lead the children in Bible reading?
15. Do we teach our children a love for the Bible?
16. Do we teach our children a reverence for the Word?
17. Do we discuss practical problems of Christian living with them?
18. Do we give our children good literature to read?
19. Do we minister to our children and bless them?

THE HOME AS A SCHOOL

The Children, Ephesians 6:4

20. Do we teach our children to honor and obey father and mother?
21. Do we train our children to live according to God's commands?
22. Do we treat each child impartially?
23. When I command and forbid, do I mean it? (as little as possible)
24. Do I make threats and promises which I cannot carry out?
25. Do I anger my children by harsh rebukes and unjust treatment?
26. Do I shout or do I quietly and firmly assert my authority?
27. Do I enforce obedience? By using the rod or withholding privileges?
28. Do I call my children by their real names or do I call them by childish nicknames?
29. Do we always have time to listen to children, to earn their confidence?
30. Do we teach thrift and stewardship accountable to God?
31. Do we observe their habits and give them the necessary interpretations of sex?

Our Youth, I Timothy 5:4

32. Do we avoid nagging and harsh rebuke that tends to harden our younger people?
33. Do I encourage initiative and a healthy spirit of independence and personal responsibility?
34. Do we keep Christ in the center of our lives?
35. Do we try to help them decide on suitable vocations?
36. Do I participate by prayer, earnest counsel, mutual respect and open discussion?
37. Do we participate in school activities to show our interest in our children?
38. Do I make the church as the central interest in their lives?
39. Do we teach them to stand up bravely for the right, even at the risk of ridicule?
40. Do we encourage them to bring their friends to our home?
41. Do we know where they go? Are we sure to have them home at a decent hour when they go out?

The Example of Parents, Psalm 101:2

42. Do we see the need of constant self-discipline?
43. Do we curse or use questionable language?

44. Do we keep a good example to back up our right instruction?
45. Do we reprove and accept reproof cheerfully for Christ's sake?
46. Are we as courteous to each other at home as we are in public?

Culture and Amusements, Ephesians 4:1

47. Do we train our child to use leisure time profitably?
48. Do we provide entertainment which keeps interests at home?
49. Do we choose good books for our library? Do I allow only wholesome literature to be read by my children?
50. Do we supervise and join in our children's entertainment?
51. Do we teach our children to love nature and the outdoors?
52. Do we take all the time we should to be outside with our children?

THE HOME AND THE CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

Church Attendance, Psalm 26:8

53. Do we as a family attend church meetings regularly?
54. Do we help the children understand worship in the meetings?
55. Do we explain what is happening and discuss the meaning of our church?
56. Do we try to awaken a true love for the people of God?
57. Do we discuss what comes at church and bring out meaning for everyday life?
58. Do we train the child to be quiet and reverent in church?
59. Do we train the child to enter into the worship?
60. Do we teach our children in the home Bible studies?
61. Do we teach our children to give generously and tithe in the church and to the Lord?

THE HOME AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

Neighborliness, I John 4:11

62. Do we train our children to be good neighbors?
63. Do we practice what we testify to others?
64. Do we practice and teach compassion to the needy?
65. Do we allow our children to quarrel or talk badly of others?
66. Do we seek to win others to Christ and encourage our children to do the same?
67. Do we permit our children to associate with only morally good friends of their own age?
68. Do we instruct our young to respect sex and warn of its possible dangers? If we wait for our children to learn about this important subject, it is too late for them to learn from us the right way.

Community, Jeremiah 29:7

69. Do we teach our children to be good citizens and obey laws?
70. Do we obey the laws ourselves?

71. Do we vote and seek God's wisdom in our voting?
72. Do we teach our children that God has a plan for the world?

(Anonymous article from New Wine Magazine, December 1972)

Lesson 19-20

Christian Principles of Dating

Satan is doing everything that he can to destroy this generation because he knows that there will be a generation that will tread on him. He uses the drug culture, music, entertainment (movies, TV, video games), toys, pornography, the Internet and many other avenues with the view of derailing this generation.

One major way he seeks to destroy young people and change the course of their lives is by promoting sexual promiscuity. Sexual promiscuity leads to damaged self-image, unplanned pregnancies, abortions, broken relationships and poorly founded marriages, which can lead to divorce. All of these things can destroy the potential of young people and hinder their ability to be a generation of spiritual warriors.

Sexual promiscuity is fanned by our western view of dating and relationships. If we are going to confront our culture, we have got to deal with the dating issue.

I. What are some of the things that complicate the issue of dating in our day?

A. Dating is not specifically discussed in the Bible.

1. In Bible times children had very little to do with the choice of whom they married.
2. They learned to love their betrothed during the espousal period, which was a period of a year prior to the marriage.
3. There was no experimental dating, as we know it today.

B. Children see a totally wrong view of sex and male/female relationships on TV, in the movies and among schoolmates.

1. Dating almost always involves or leads to kissing, touching and eventually intercourse.
2. Dating is a status thing among young people. Your status is determined by whom you date or if you have a boyfriend or girlfriend.

C. Parents themselves have had no teaching on biblical principles that might apply to the dating scene.

1. They themselves possibly did it wrong.
2. They do not know what the Bible says.
3. They have no ammunition to use to establish a line with their young people.

- D. Some parents think that matchmaking and early dating is cute and they foster it or promote it early in their child's life. This activity arouses sexual interest in your child long before those feelings can be legitimized.
- E. Parents find it difficult to resist the persuasions of their own teenagers.
 - 1. Their children accuse them of being old fashioned.
 - 2. Few other parents have strong standards and your children use that against you.
 - 3. Often even pastors and youth groups do not have clear standards.

All these things can lay a very poor foundation for dating and set young people up for serious failure.

If we are going to find success in this area, we must be willing to submit this area of our lives to the principles of God's word as it addresses all relationships outside of marriage.

II. What are some biblical concepts that apply to this area of dating and relationships?

- A. God wants us to be free from any premarital sexual encounters and promiscuity (I Th. 4:3-8).

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. 7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. 8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. –NIV

The word used in this passage for “possess” his own vessel can be translated “acquire, obtain, possess or purchase.” There is a biblical way to gain a wife.

In the process of obtaining a spouse we are to abstain from sexual immorality. We are to obtain a spouse in a way that is honorable and does not in any way jeopardize our sanctification or holiness.

Sexual immorality by biblical definition includes the following:

1. Idolatry, which is exalting someone or something else above God (Col. 3:5-7).

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

2. Licentiousness sometimes translated “lewdness”, which is the stirring up of sensual desires (e.g. kissing, petting, inappropriate touching, indecent bodily movements, even homosexual acts, See: I Pet. 4:1-6; II Pet. 2:7; Eph. 4:17-24).

*Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in **lewdness**, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. 5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. I Peter 4:1-6*

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to **lewdness**, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:17-24*

3. Passion of lust (Col. 3:5-6; I Th. 4:5).
4. Evil Desires (Col. 3:5-6; Rom. 7:8)
5. Fornication, which is any form of sex before marriage (I Cor. 6:13, 18-20; Gal. 5:19). This is the Greek word from which we get the word “pornography.”

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

I Corinthians 6:18-20

- B. God does want us to get married, but some how He wants us to do so without sinning in the process.
1. The example of Mary and Joseph (Mt. 1:18). They were betrothed or engaged to be married, but they did not come together in a sexual way until after they were married.

Now this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. –NLT

2. When we take advantage of another person sexually outside of marriage, the Bible speaks of this as defrauding them (I Th. 4:6). Defrauding is “using, taking advantage of or injuring” someone else for your own gratification. It involves taking something that does not belong to you.
- C. The romantic desires that we have within us are given to us by God and are meant to push us toward marriage, which is part of God’s eternal purpose (Pro. 5:15-20).
1. These desires must be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit (I Tim. 5:1-2; I Th. 4:7-8).

*Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him respectfully as though he were your own father. Talk to the younger men as you would to your own brothers. Treat the older women as you would your mother, **and treat the younger women with all purity as your own sisters.** I Timothy 5:1-2*

2. These desires can only be righteously fulfilled in marriage (Pro. 5:15-20, NLT).

Drink water from your own well--share your love only with your wife. 16 Why spill the water of your springs in public, having sex with just anyone? 17 You should reserve it for yourselves. Don't share it with strangers. 18 Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. 19 She is a loving doe, a graceful deer. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love. 20 Why be captivated, my son, with an immoral woman, or embrace the breasts of an adulterous woman?

III. What is the difference between God’s pattern for developing relationships and Satan’s pattern?

God’s pattern for developing relationships is the exact opposite of Satan’s pattern.

A. Man's Nature—A triune being

Man is a three part being consisting of spirit, soul and body (I Th. 5:23). The spirit is the God-conscious part of man, the soul is the self-conscious part of man and the body is the sense or world conscious part of man.

B. Satan's Pattern—Body, Soul and Spirit

When Satan establishes relationship with man he starts from the body or sense realm (good for food), moves to the soul realm (desire to make one wise) so that he can possess the spirit of man.

C. God's Pattern—Spirit, Soul and Body

God's pattern is exactly the opposite. He begins relating to man by possessing his spirit, moving from there to the soul and finally touching the physical body of man.

IV. How does God's pattern for relationships translate into a pattern for dating relationships?

God's pattern for relationships should serve as the pattern for dating relationships.

A. Satan's dating plan leads to death.

1. The relationship starts in the physical realm (physical attraction, physical activities, surface communication only for the purpose of getting what you want).
2. Hopefully, the relationship moves to the soul realm, however, it often never does (Why don't we ever talk).
3. The relationship is based on the physical.
 - a. This is why physical beauty and the retention of it is so important to people.
 - b. This is why sexual experimentation is seen to be necessary to "keep the marriage alive."

B. God's dating plan leads to life.

1. The relationship starts by being one in the spirit.
 - a. A Christian could never marry someone that is not a Christian because there can be no unity of spirit (II Cor. 6:14).

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

- b. If you cannot marry an unbeliever, you must not date an unbeliever. If you do you are setting yourself up for an emotional attachment that may be difficult to control.
 - c. We must begin all relationships with the opposite sex as brothers and sisters in Christ. All of the admonitions concerning how to treat a brother or sister apply to this relationship (love, honor, seek best interest, be considerate, etc.).
 - d. Activities that promote a unity of the spirit include church services, youth group, Bible studies, group fellowship, and Christian service projects.
2. The second level of relationship is being one in the soul realm.
- a. This involves becoming one in our mind, will and emotions.
 - b. This could be described as cultivating deepening levels of friendship. The levels of relationship include:
 - i. Acquaintances
 - ii. Casual Friends
 - iii. Close Friends
 - iv. Intimate Friends
 - c. It is when the relationship reaches the “close friend” level that you are in a position to begin exploring the idea of marriage.
 - d. Activities in this period should be limited to non-romantic type activities that still involve others, family members and friends (sports, hobbies, family outings, and group activities).
3. The third level involves the coming together in the physical realm. This realm is reserved for after marriage.

The following chart will give a summary of God’s dating plan in contrast to Satan’s dating plan.

	God’s Dating Plan	Satan’s Dating Plan
Basis	God centered relationships based on wholesome attraction, common commitment to God, and Christian friendship	Self-centered relationships based on natural attraction, feelings and sensual desires
Foundation	Moral absolutes found in the Bible—Principles	Situational ethics and a lack of absolutes—Feelings
Goals	Mutual Edification—Giving	Mutual Gratification—Receiving

Focus	Focus on becoming one in spirit and soul	Focus on physical activity and experimentation
Pacing	Relationship takes time to grow through the stages, getting to know one another	Relationship moves quickly, bypassing levels to take advantage of the other
Relationship to Others	Relationship inclusive of the Body of Christ	Relationship exclusive of the Body of Christ
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger relationship to Lord • Stronger relationship to others • Healthy self-image • Character development for the better • Good example to others • Peace • Joy • Strong foundation for marriage • Abundant Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakened relationship to God • Weakened relationship to others • Unhealthy self-image • Character change for the worse • Influence others to sin • Confusion, strife, pain • Sorrow and regret • Bad foundation for marriage. • Death

Run from anything that stimulates youthful lust. Follow anything that makes you want to do right. Pursue faith and love and peace, and enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. II Timothy 2:22

V. What are the principles that should govern the dating process?

A. Principle #1 – Submission to God

We must yield all of our desires, values, actions and decisions to God. His will must be sought.

B. Principle #2 – Covering

We must seek the counsel and confirmation of those over us as a practical way of measuring our responsiveness to authority. It also protects us from unwise decisions.

C. Principle #3 – Responsibility

We must recognize that God holds us accountable for how we relate to others. We must also recognize that good relationships do not just happen by chance. We must be willing to take responsibility for the progress or status of the relationship.

D. Principle #4 – Commitment

We must maintain a loyalty to God, to both sets of parents and to the other person as a brother or sister in Christ whether or not the relationship leads to marriage. Commitment to them suggests that what we do in this relationship is in the best interest of all parties involved.

E. Principle #5 – Sensitivity

We must at all times be considerate of the needs, opinions and values of the other person putting their wellbeing ahead of one's own.

F. Principle #6 – Expectations

We must yield our expectations of the other person to God. Unrealistic expectations are caused by seeking to receive, desiring others to meet your needs and focusing on how someone else can please you.

G. Principle #7 – Control

We must monitor the emotional level of the relationship by limiting the factors that accelerate the relationship—time, words and actions.

H. Principle #8 – Timing

We must be willing to pace the relationship to allow it to grow naturally over a longer period of time.

I. Principle #9 – Mutuality

We must communicate openly about the relationship to ensure that both parties involved are on the same level in terms of commitment, direction and goals.

J. Principle #10 – Love

We must at all times follow the dictates of true “agape” love as described in I Corinthians 13 and keep the other person's best interests in mind.

K. Principle #11 – Assumptions

We must avoid making assumptions in the relationship based on feelings, body language and what others say and commit to open sharing to clarify perceptions.

L. Principle #12 – Communication

We must promote interpersonal understanding and commitment by an honest and meaningful exchange on a wide range of areas.

VI. Parent's relationship and involvement in the dating process.

- A. Parents are the child's direct covering until the child gets married. Therefore they should be actively involved in the process.

- B. Parents should not promote the idea of matching children up in their early years. They arouse desires that cannot be righteously fulfilled. We do not want our children to “come alive” too soon sexually.
- C. Parents should be careful to show godly affection to all of their children as they grow through the stages of their life (dating your daughters?).
- D. Parents should instill certain things in their children early on about friendship. It is usually from their pool of friends that dating relationships arise.
 - 1. How to choose friends (commitment to God, positive attitude toward authority, truthful, self-controlled).
 - 2. How to make friends.
 - 3. How to treat friends.
- E. Parents should give their children specific guidelines for relating to the opposite sex before problems arise.
 - 1. How to treat members of the opposite sex with respect?
 - 2. What things are inappropriate in relating to the opposite sex?
 - 3. The importance of modesty in dress.
 - 4. The dangers and consequences of improper sexual activity.
 - 5. How to deal with hormones (sex education)?
 - 6. What is their personal philosophy and timeline for one-on-one dating?
 - 7. What the Bible teaches about sexual activity outside of marriage?
- F. Parents should encourage their young people to develop a wide range of wholesome relationships.
 - 1. Providing a safe haven for their friends.
 - 2. Planning gender-neutral activities for their friends.
 - 3. Encouraging participation in wholesome group activities.
- G. Parents should give their children specific guidelines for their social activities.
 - 1. When should they be home (curfew)?
 - 2. With whom are they going?
 - 3. Where are they going?
 - 4. What will they be doing?
 - 5. Who is responsible? Who is chaperoning?
 - 6. Who is driving or providing transportation?
- H. Parents should guide their children through the dating process when the time is appropriate for such a relationship.
 - 1. Both parents should grant permission for a dating relationship to start.
 - 2. Parents should regulate time and relationship factors (phone calls, frequency, duration, etc.).
 - 3. Parents should monitor the dating process with accountability questions.

4. Parents should give positive feedback for wise decisions.
 - I. Parents must be willing to step into relationships that are developing in an improper way.
 - J. Parents must avoid trying to relive their lives through their young people.

Note: Some of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

Lesson 21

Divorce, Remarriage and Reconciliation

This lesson is intended to be a simple, basic outline of the subject of marriage, divorce, remarriage and reconciliation. It is NOT intended to answer all the questions to this complex subject. Books have been written on this subject. What we are interested in more than anything else is what God's word says as it applies to this area.

I. What is the objective of this teaching?

A. Informative

The objective of this teaching is to help Christians to understand what the Bible teaching on this very important subject.

B. Preventive

The objective of this teaching is to underscore the permanence, solemnity and finality of the marriage bond.

C. Restorative

The objective of this teaching is to offer mercy, comfort and strength to those who live under condemnation as a result of divorce.

II. What are some key definitions that serve as a basis for this discussion?

A. Marriage

Marriage is the contractual, binding, commitment to live together in a relationship recognized morally by God and society, enacted verbally, validated legally, and consummated physically.

B. Divorce

Divorce is the breaking and forsaking of the marriage contract and all of its moral, legal and physical obligations.

C. Valid Remarriage

A valid remarriage is entering into a new marriage contract by or with someone who has been formerly married but is not in any way bound to the former partner or partners by some sort of marital obligation (those obligations having been dissolved through death, a God-sanctioned divorce or remarriage on the part of the former spouse or spouses).

D. Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the process of saying and doing the things necessary to restore and reunite a couple into the relationship that God wants spiritually and/or physically.

III. What is God's view of marriage?

- A. Marriage is a part of God's design for intimate relationship between opposite sexes (Gen. 2:24-25).
- B. Marriage is a covenant commitment that binds a man and a woman together in a special relationship of love and mutual sharing (I Pet. 3:7).

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

- C. Marriage is blessed, sanctified and exalted by God because it speaks of Christ's relationship to the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Heb. 13:4).
- D. Marriage in God's mind is meant to be a permanent (I Cor. 7:10-11).

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

God never intended that people should ever consider divorce as an option to an unhappy marriage (Mark 10:2-9). Marriage is a covenant or "contract" between a man and a woman to be held inviolable by both.

The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" testing Him. 3 And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." 5 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. 6 But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

IV. What does the Bible say about divorce?

- A. In the beginning: God intended that the marriage bond be permanent (Gen. 2:24-25; Mark 10:6-9).

- B. Under the law of Moses, God permitted divorce because of the hardness of their heart and unwillingness to accept God’s high standard (Deut. 21:10-14; 24:1-4; Mt. 19:7-8; Mark 10:5).

They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”
Matthew 19:7-8

- C. Even in the Old Testament God made it clear through the voice of the prophets that He hated divorce and that it is a reproach to His name (Mal. 2:14-16).

You cry out, “Why has the LORD abandoned us?” I’ll tell you why! Because the LORD witnessed the vows you and your wife made to each other on your wedding day when you were young. But you have been disloyal to her, though she remained your faithful companion, the wife of your marriage vows. Didn’t the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard yourself; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. “For I hate divorce!” says the LORD, the God of Israel. “It is as cruel as putting on a victim’s bloodstained coat,” says the LORD Almighty. “So guard yourself; always remain loyal to your wife.”
Malachi 2:14-16, NLT

- D. In the Gospels Jesus came to bring honor to the institution of marriage by bringing us back to God’s higher law.

Jesus clearly stated that whoever divorces for any cause, except fornication, commits adultery if they marry another and the new partner who marries them is guilty of adultery as well (Mt. 19:3-10).

Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: “Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for any reason?” 4 “Haven’t you read the Scriptures?” Jesus replied. “They record that from the beginning ‘God made them male and female.’ 5 And he said, ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’ 6 Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together.” 7 “Then why did Moses say a man could merely write an official letter of divorce and send her away?” they asked. 8 Jesus replied, “Moses permitted divorce as a concession to your hard-hearted wickedness, but it was not what God had originally intended. 9 And I tell you this, a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery--unless his wife has been unfaithful.” 10 Jesus’ disciples then said to him, “Then it is better not to marry!” –NLT

- E. In the Epistles Paul made it clear to the Corinthians that God’s command is that husbands and wives are not to divorce their respective mates (I Cor. 7:10-12).

Summary on Divorce

The Bible makes a clear statement that God’s viewpoint underscores the permanence of the marriage vow with the strongest emphasis possible (Mt. 19:10). Divorce is not

an option to be considered even in the face of great unhappiness. Jesus only allowed for one possible cause for divorce and that is adultery. Even with this tremendous strain upon the marriage, divorce is not meant to be seen as a requirement. In God's mind the highest goal is always to forgive and reconstruct or build a God-honoring relationship.

V. What are the scenarios where it seems that God actually allows for divorce?

God seems to permit divorce in the following two cases:

- A. When one of the parties commits perpetual immorality the offended party may initiate a divorce.
 - 1. Divorce should not be initiated in the instance of a one time occurrence. Forgiveness and reconciliation should be the focus in such a case.
 - 2. There is no requirement to divorce in such a case. So much depends on the heart of the offended party.
- B. When one is married to an unbeliever who does not want to maintain the marriage and initiates a divorce (I Cor. 7:15-16).

But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

- 1. This type of divorce should never be initiated by the believer (I Cor. 7:13).

And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

- 2. By staying in such a marriage with a right spirit and attitude an unbelieving partner can be won to the Lord (I Pet. 3:1-2; I Cor. 7:16).

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

I Peter 3:1-2

- C. If believers get a divorce or separate for anything other than perpetual immorality they are to remain unmarried or else be reconciled (I Cor. 7:10-11).

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

VI. Is divorce a forgivable sin?

If one initiates a wrongful divorce and later genuinely recognizes the error of his or her way and sincerely repents, he or she has the full assurance from God's word that he or she will be forgiven. The Bible makes it clear that only one sin is unpardonable, namely blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Mt. 12:31). No true Bible scholar will assert that divorce is the unpardonable sin.

Thus divorce, a sin like any other sin, is washed away by the blood of Jesus and taken from the record of sins recorded against us never to be raised in this life or at the judgment day. We should forgive ourselves and others who have found themselves in this state even as God forgives us (Eph. 4:32).

The consequences of the sin of divorce, however, may not be able to be undone. Like many other sins that we commit, the law of reaping tragically exacts its toll in the memory and the circumstances as one watches the seeds of a broken home harvested. These consequences can only be lived through by the sustaining endurance found only in the depths of the grace and mercy of God.

VII. What does the Bible say about remarriage?

There is very little direct reference to the concept of remarriage in the Scriptures but several passages allude to it indirectly.

- A. Remarriage under the law of Moses was an understood privilege just as divorce was liberally granted (Ex. 21:7-10; Deut. 24:1-4; Lev. 21:14). It should be noted that the High Priest could not marry a widow or a divorced woman but others could.
- B. Remarriage is spoken of in the Epistles as Paul makes clear that death finally, ultimately and absolutely dissolves the marriage contract. The living partner is free to remarry or marry again without condemnation (Rom. 7:1-3). Death of one partner ends all of the marital obligations of the other partner.

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

- C. The right of remarriage is implied in three passages of Scripture:
 - 1. In the Old Testament under the Mosaic Law, Moses made it clear that the remarriage of one who is divorced prevents him from ever returning to his original partner. The original partner, since there can be no reconciliation, is free from any marital obligation to the original spouse and thus is free to remarry (Deut. 24:1-4).

2. In the Gospels Jesus seems to imply that whoever divorces because of the adultery committed by their spouse would not be committing adultery if they (the “innocent” party) remarried (Mt. 19:9). However, they might be guilty of hardness of heart.

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.

3. In the Epistles Paul seems to suggest that those who were divorced by an unbelieving spouse were not under bondage to the original marriage covenant (I Cor. 7:15).

But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.

If your husband or wife isn't a follower of the Lord and decides to divorce you, then you should agree to it. You are no longer bound to that person. After all, God chose you and wants you to live at peace. –CEV

D. A valid remarriage is one that fits the following criteria:

1. One partner dies leaving the other free to remarry.
2. One partner divorces another and remarries (wrongfully), leaving the other partner free to remarry (legitimately) since there can be no reconciliation (Deut. 24:1-4).
3. One partner divorces a spouse who has committed perpetual adultery which leaves the “innocent party” free to remarry. In any such divorce it is recommended that considerable time go by before a new relationship is established for two reasons.
 - a. To give the offended party time to heal and minimize the carry over into a new marriage.
 - b. To give God a chance to bring change to the situation opening the door to a possible future reconciliation.

As a general rule it can be said that God allows remarriage wherever He allows divorce to take place.

Remarriage is a very serious undertaking, as it once again is a solemn vow to remain with the new partner as long as both live. It should only be entered into with real caution and counsel in order to not repeat the mistakes of former relationships. Keep in mind that second marriages have a higher failure rate than first marriages. Paul seems to indicate that in many cases it would simply be better not to marry again (I Cor. 7:8-9).

But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

VIII. What is the biblical basis for reconciliation?

- A. The general principle of reconciliation in broken relationships applies to any and all who have become estranged in some form or another from someone else (Mt. 18:15-20; Eph. 4:24-32).
- B. Specifically in the matter of divorce, Paul says that divorced Christian partners should remain unmarried or be reconciled. If one marries following divorce, there can be no reconciliation to the marriage and therefore the mistake of divorce cannot be rectified (I Cor. 7:10-11). The honor of God's name is at stake in the divorce of two believers. Every effort must be taken to preserve that honor as a testimony to the world that Christians are fully able to keep their word to God and each other.

IX. What is meant by reconciliation?

There are two relevant kinds of reconciliation:

A. Spiritual Reconciliation

Spiritual reconciliation is the process whereby two estranged, divorced or separated people resolve the resentments, deal with unrepentant and unforgiven sins and cease from the divisive attitudes that have separated them (Mt. 18:15-20; Eph. 4:24-32). To fail to be reconciled in the Spirit is to give Satan further advantage and opportunity to reproach the name of God.

This type of reconciliation should even take place between a believer and an unbeliever as much as it is possible to enable the believer to reinstate his Christian witness (if it is tarnished), to rid himself of guilt and to give the unbeliever an opportunity to accept Christ as personal savior even if the estranged parties never re-unite geographically. This type of reconciliation should always be attempted (Rom. 12:18).

B. Physical or Geographical Reconciliation

This type of reconciliation occurs in the process of spiritual reconciliation. In such a case, the estranged couple chooses to forgive each other, repent of their sins, and move back together into the same dwelling. In the case of those who have already divorced, this will include remarrying each other.

X. Why is the truth of reconciliation so important to believers?

- A. It enables married or formerly married partners to break the power of sin in their lives (Jam. 4:6-7).
- B. It reinstates the testimony of the Church of Jesus Christ in an age of covenant-breaking (II Tim. 3:3).
- C. It underscores and re-emphasizes the permanence of the marriage bond (Mt.19:10).
- D. It testifies to the ability of the grace of God to conquer all human obstacles.

Note: Some of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

Lesson 22

The Blended Family

The fact of the matter is that for the last number of years the divorce rate among both Christian and non-Christian couples has been over 50%. That means that one half of all marriages are ending in divorce. Most of those who divorce eventually remarry. What makes it even more complicated is that we are seeing “serial marriages” where one or both parties in any given marriage have been married more than once. Hollywood marriages can last as little as 48 hours. It is the rare exception in Hollywood for a marriage to last a lifetime.

As a result it is often difficult to talk about a “normal” family situation. Many homes are single parent homes and even more are what can be termed “blended families.” Blended families have particular challenges that go well beyond the treatment of specific verses in the Bible.

However, for second or third marriages with children, or when one person marries a spouse with children, the statistics change dramatically. “Conservative” statistics also show that the divorce rate of remarriages exceeds sixty percent. Part of the reason for the high rate is that most struggling stepfamilies who end up divorcing, actually quit within the first 4 years—before their family has had time to blend.

I. How is the blended family different from the nuclear family?

- A. The blended family is different because many of the members of the blended family are not physically related to each other?
- B. The blended family is different because the members of the family do not share all of the same history and experiences with each other.
- C. The blended family is different because there are bona-fide members of the family who do not reside permanently with the family.
- D. The blended family is different because it contains relationships that are not clearly defined in most people’s experience.
 - 1. You have step parents.
 - 2. You have step brothers and sisters.
 - 3. You have many other step relatives (aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc.).
- E. The blended family is different because it often is faced with legal and financial requirements that are not part of the nuclear family experience.
- F. The blended family is different because members of the family are often placed in roles and relationship over which they had no choice.
- G. The blended family faces the normal challenges of any family with much more complex issues added to them.

II. What are some of the unique challenges that blended families face?

A. The challenge of acceptance

1. Parents often find it difficult to win the acceptance of their stepchildren.

Part of the problem is that the children may not have been courted at the same time as the courtship to marriage took place. In some cases you are trying to build a relationship with someone who does not want a relationship with you.

2. New parents may not even like their new stepchildren and may find it difficult to love and accept them.
3. Children have a difficult time accepting new parents as their “real” parents.

Today, at least one-third of all children in the U.S. are expected to live in a stepfamily before they reach age 18. The blended family is becoming more of a norm than an aberration.

- a. They are reluctant to call their new parent “mom” or “dad” because they do not have that kind of relationship with them.

This is why you have children calling their stepparent by their first name rather than the more affectionate title of “mom” or “dad.” This makes for a constant reminder that “you are not my real father” or “you are not my real mother.”

- b. They are reluctant to warm up to their new parent because they feel in doing so they are being disloyal to their real parent.
4. The new set of relatives (especially grandparents) or extended families do not necessarily want to accept all of the members of the new blended family.

Something that compounds this problem is the fact that most second marriages do not last and many of these arrangements are only seen as temporary and not permanent. Why put forth the effort?

One study yielded the following sad statistic (From *Stepfamily Association of America*, Winter, 1997): Ninety-five percent of all divorced people eventually remarry. Seventy-six percent of second marriages fail within five years. Eighty-seven percent of third marriages fail within five years. Ninety-three percent of fourth marriages end in divorce within five years.

B. The challenge of discipline

Most families have different standards of discipline and different guidelines for life in general. When you blend two families, both parents and children have a challenge.

1. Parents have the challenge of enforcing discipline or standards that are not accepted by the “other family” in their life.
2. Parents may find it difficult to discipline “someone else’s child.” They may also get a reaction from the “real” parent when the child comes crying to them.
3. Children live in a constant state of confusion and comparison.
4. In addition, tension is often created between the two or more families involved in this process with the biological parents wanting to defend the rights of “their” child.

C. The challenge of consistency

When working with children who are not with you all of the time and who live under different sets of rules and who have varying relationships with you, it is difficult to be consistent in the application of love, affection, discipline and reward.

D. The challenge of equal treatment

1. The tendency of most parents will be to naturally favor their own biological children.
2. In some cases, however, the opposite may be true. Parents may actually favor those that are not their biological children over compensating to win their affections.
3. In either case children will always perceive that they are being discriminated against whatever the parent does. This perceived fact will be used to manipulate the parents.

E. The challenge of manipulation

Children by their very definition will try to manipulate parents to get what they want. In the blended family children have a lot more ammunition to use against their parents in this regard.

F. The challenge of new living arrangements

Because the size of the family grows immediately, the only child now has to share his parents with someone else. Or in the case of larger families, children may now need to share a bedroom or place at the table where they never had to before.

G. The challenge of establishing boundaries

It must be remembered that when children live together who are not biologically related to each other the whole issue of sex and dating can be interjected into a

home. Clear boundaries must be established to avoid inappropriate involvements within the family structure.

H. The challenge of coordinating family activities

This involves coordinating visitation rights, family vacations, school breaks, future weddings and who is suppose to be doing what and when. This can get very complicated especially if the two families live a great distance from each other.

III. What are some keys to success in the blending of families?

A. Prepare your children long in advance of a potential remarriage.

1. Get them used to the idea early.
2. Court the children of the other partner.
3. Get them together occasionally to discern the chemistry and identify potential problems.
4. Be ready to put the new marriage on hold if things are explosive.

B. Be patient with family members who are adjusting to the new family structure.

1. It takes time for new relationships to form. Love does not happen automatically. Allow bonds to develop slowly.

Because stepfamilies are so complicated, it takes a long time, often 4-7 years or longer for people to get to know each other, to create positive relationships, and to develop a family history.

2. Be careful not to foster aggressive or unrealistic expectations regarding how long it will take to truly blend. In this case you will be setting yourself up for positive surprises beyond your expectation.
3. Try to put yourself in the position of the other person to understand what they may be going through.

In some cases you have taken children away from friends, schools and other familiar settings. You should do everything you can to help them make transitions.

4. Do not over-react to unloving things that may be said in the initial stage of development.

Oftentimes children say things out of hurt because they are not happy with a situation that has been thrust upon them. They may be resentful and they express that resentment with anger. Try not to take it personally; they are

reacting to the situation and not necessarily to you. You just happen to be one of the agents of change in their life—a change that they are not excited about.

C. Be sensitive to the feelings that the children will naturally have.

1. Most children will have preferred that their mom and dad had stayed together.

They may actually hope that the second marriage fails so that mom and dad can get back together. They may even subconsciously do things that appear to undermine the new marriage relationship to help it to fail.

2. Most children feel that the breakup of the original marriage was in some way “their fault.” You must constantly reassure them that they had absolutely nothing to do with it.
3. Most children will struggle with transferring their affection to a new parent that does not feel like their parent.
4. Many children can benefit by talking to a pastor or Christian counselor during this adjustment period.

D. Never run down the other parent or draw comparisons between the families.

1. Encourage and assist children in their efforts to stay in contact with biological parents.
2. Teach them that honoring their parents is not dependent upon their agreeing with all of the parent’s decisions.
3. This means not getting into competition with the other family in gift-giving, activities and privileges granted.

E. Treat each member of the family as an individual.

Each child is unique and will process the situation differently. Do not feel that those who take a little longer are a problem. Often they are people of great loyalty who will eventually be equally loyal to you.

F. Avoid comparing your blended family with other blended families.

Everybody’s situation is completely different and the factors with which they must deal are unique to them.

G. Make every attempt to keep your families close.

1. This means geographical closeness.
 - a. This will make it easier to be a parent to children that you may not have custody of.

- b. This will make it easier for the children to spend quality time with both biological parents.
 - 2. This means relational closeness.

A relationship with a former spouse is going to be a fact of life. Every attempt should be made to keep this a friendly arrangement.
- H. Remember that one of the best things that you can do for your children is to have a great marriage. The last thing you want to put them through is another breakup.
 - 1. This means making your marriage a priority.
 - 2. This means spending time alone on a regular basis.
- I. Be in agreement between husband and wife regarding the new order of things.
 - 1. Unity will be a key to success. It will also relieve stress on the marriage relationship.
 - 2. This means that we must respect the perspective of our spouse and their history of parenting.
 - 3. This means that we must understand that compromises will have to be made.
 - 4. You may even consider meeting with the other set of parents to work out standards and guidelines.
- J. Keep lines of communication open at all times.
 - 1. This is important for each individual child.

It is critical especially at the beginning of the blending to spend individual time with each child to help discern their state of mind and how they are doing. This is important in any family but especially in the blended family.
 - 2. This is important for the family as a whole.
 - a. It is good to have regular family meetings where challenges can be openly discussed.
 - b. It is not good to try to discuss serious things when everyone is upset, exhausted or having a bad day.

Conclusion

After all of what we have discussed, it makes you wonder whether or not it is all worth it. If you are in a blended family presently, you have no choice. You have to make it work. If you are only contemplating this situation, you need to know that sometimes it is better to wait to

remarry until after the children are raised. This will require laying your life down for the sake of your children. Surveys show that after five years of a blended marriage over fifty percent of children do not regard their new family as an improvement over their previous family situation. Even though their family failed prior to the divorce, the children said that if they had their choice they would return to it.

Lesson 23

Grand Parenting

One of the characteristics of a nation that is undergoing moral decay is the tendency to cast off the old and give them little or no respect (Is. 3:56; Deut. 28:50; Lam. 5:12; Is. 47:6). One of the characteristics of this day is to cast off the old, and, with the old, the council that is in them (Ps. 71:9).

Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails.

The beautiful thing about our day is that God is calling both young and old together. In almost every home God has given us the opportunity to tap the wisdom of the old and teach our children to honor and respect the aged by means of the presence of grandparents.

Oftentimes families fail in this area for two reasons. First of all older people have a wrong view of themselves and fail to take the initiative. Second of all, the parents often fail to give their parents the honor and respect that is due to them.

I. What is to be an older person's attitude toward old age?

It is better than the alternative!

A. They are to look forward to it.

1. It is a reward for righteousness (Deut. 5:33; 11:21; I Kgs. 3:14; Job 5:26; Ps. 91:16; Pro. 3:2; 9:11; 10:27).

With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation. Psalm 91:16

2. It is a time to enjoy the fruit of one's hands (Is. 65:22; Pro. 17:6).

Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father. Proverbs 17:6

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. Isaiah 65:22

3. It is to be a time of real fruitfulness (Ps. 92:13-14).

Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing...

B. They are to look at it as a blessing. In Old Testament times, old age was greatly desired and its attainment was regarded as a divine blessing.

1. Silver hair is a crown of glory (Pro. 16:31).

The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness.

2. Gray hair is the beauty of the aged (Pro. 20:29).

The glory of young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their gray head.

- C. They are to realize that God is very present and still working in their lives (Is. 46:4).

Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

II. What are the qualities that are to be possessed by people of age?

They are to provide wisdom and understanding (Job 12:12)

Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

Job 12:12

- A. Superior wisdom belongs to the aged; hence, in the Scriptures we always find them in positions of authority and guidance (Job 12:20).
- B. “Much experience is the crown of old men, and the fear of God is their glory” (Ecclesiasticus 25:6, Apocryphal).
- C. It should be noted that it is possible to waste your life in folly and not acquire wisdom that normally comes with years (Job. 32:9; Eccl. 4:13).

Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice.

Job 32:9

III. What is the ministry of the older to the younger?

- A. The older are to be people of counsel (Ezek. 7:26).
 1. It is wisdom for the young to seek their counsel and give heed to it. Jethro gave good advice to Moses (Ex. 18:13-27).
 2. It is folly for the young to reject the counsel of the older. Rehoboam rejected the counsel of the elders and ended up splitting the kingdom in half (I Kgs. 12:6-8; II Chr. 10:6-13).

Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, “How do you advise me to answer these people?” And they spoke to him, saying, “If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words

to them, then they will be your servants forever.” But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him.

B. The older are to guide the younger generation into the purposes of God.

1. God revealed His plans through the elders of Israel (Ex. 3:16-18; 12:21; 17:5-6).
2. The elders were responsible to teach and stabilize the younger generation (Deut. 32:7; Job. 21:7; Joel 1:2; Titus 2:28).

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you...

Deuteronomy 32:7

3. The older are to impart their wisdom and experience to the young that they might be able to enter in (Ps. 71:18).

Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.

4. The older are to lead the way when God says build (Ezra 5:1-5, 9).

C. The older are to be examples to the younger (II Tim. 1:5)

when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

IV. What should be the attitude of the young to the old?

A. They should honor and respect the older (Lev. 19:32)

You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD.

1. The elder men are honorable in God’s eyes (Is. 9:14-15).
2. They are the spiritual fathers and mothers in the house of the Lord (Mt. 19:29) and they should have the same respect as parents (Pro. 23:22; Ex. 20:12).

Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Proverbs 23:22

3. To show lack of respect to the elders will bring judgment (II Kgs. 2:23; Deut. 27:16; Pro. 20:20; 30:17; Mt. 15:4).

Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness. Proverbs 20:20

B. They should seek out and listen to their counsel (Pro. 1:8; Eph. 6:2).

My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Proverbs 1:8

C. They should be cautious about their own opinions in the presence of the elder (Job. 32:4-6).

D. They should follow the faith of the old to be strong (Heb. 13:7; Phil. 4:9).

E. They should not cast off the old (Ps. 71:9).

V. What are some ways that parents can help their children relate to the grandparents?

A. Parents should visit their parents often to maintain a vital relationship.

B. Parents should always treat their parents with respect, honor and dignity in the presence of the grandchildren.

C. Parents should seek the counsel of their parents.

D. Parents should emphasize the positive qualities in the lives of their parents to their children.

E. Parents should encourage their children to do special things for the grandparents.

F. Parents should make sure their children spend time with their grandparents.

G. Parents should be prepared to assist their parents when they are old.

H. Parents should not use grandparents as their only babysitters (emergency only).

VI. What are some ways that grandparents can become a more vital part in the lives of the future generations?

When considering this area, a key word is “availability.” Because often in our society grandparents live far apart from their sons and daughters and their grandchildren, they must make themselves as available as they can in their particular situation. Grandchildren should grow up relating naturally to their grandparents.

The following are only a few suggestions for ways in which grandparents can naturally include the grandchildren in their lives.

- A. Assist the parents if possible when the new grandchildren arrive.
- B. Visit at times on your own initiative. During these times take an active involvement with the children.
 - 1. Holding them
 - 2. Feeding them
 - 3. Playing with them
 - 4. Rocking them
 - 5. Putting them to bed
 - 6. Telling them a story
 - 7. Praying with them
- C. Take pictures of the children and pictures of you with the children. These pictures could be put into an album and could be used to shape many wonderful memories.
- D. Take the grandchildren with you on trips, on outings, to the park or even shopping.
- E. Include your grandchildren in the everyday duties of life. Have them help you with yard work, washing the car, cleaning the garage, etc.
- F. Involve the older children in your prayer life. Let them know this is a priority in your lives.
- G. Let them spend the night with you occasionally.
- H. Be willing to help the grandchildren with homework when you are aware of it.
- I. Tell the grandchildren stories of your day. Show them pictures of a generation ago to help broaden their thinking and world view.
- J. Help teach grandchildren to work with their hands by sharing crafts and skills (sewing, knitting, woodworking, drawing, painting, etc.).
- K. If a grandparent has a real special activity like fishing, hunting, hiking, etc., why not take the grandchild with him or her? These activities will help build happy memories in the mind of the child.
- L. Help your grandchild with a special project.

Of course, all of these suggestions are based on certain ideal conditions. There are many variables that can affect how much these kinds of things can be done; the age, health and geographical location of the grandparents may make many of these things impossible. However, there is something every grandparent can do, even if it is simply an occasional telephone call. All will contribute to building happy memories for all.

Note: Most of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.

Lesson 24

The Ministry of the Family

God has a definite purpose and goal in all of His dealings with us as individuals and as families. God deals with us to bring us to maturity so that we might in turn reach out to others. God re-makes and re-shapes our lives so that we can become effective instruments in His hand for the evangelization, growth and development of the lost and struggling of this world. God's vision is bigger than an individual. God's vision is bigger than a family or even a particular church. God's vision is for the world (John 3:16). God has extended His salvation to us that we can in turn reach out to others.

I. What is the basic reason why God blesses his people with abundance and truth?

God operates on a very simple principle. He blesses us to be a blessing.

A. He did this with Abraham (Gen. 12:2-3).

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

B. He did this with the children of Israel (Ex. 19:4-6; Is. 43:9-10, 12).

"You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen..." Isaiah 43:10

C. He does this with everyone (II Cor. 1:3-4; I Tim. 6:17-19).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. II Corinthians 1:3-4

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. I Timothy 6:17-19

II. What is the responsibility of God's people who have been blessed with truth?

In response to what God has done, God expects His people to be willing to reach out to others. God has established His people as a royal priesthood (Ex. 19:4-6; I Pet. 2:5-9).

As a priesthood we are to:

- A. Be a servant nation to the world.
- B. Meditate the blessing of God to the rest of God's possession (Ex. 19:5).
- C. Live in the "environment of God" while living in the midst of the nations, thus showing forth His glory and light (Mt. 5:16).
- D. Be God's vehicle to show forth God's virtues to the world (Is. 43:21; I Pet. 2:9).
- E. Be witnesses to the world of the power and love of God (Is. 44:8; 43:9-12; Acts 1:8).

III. What place does the home have in reaching out to others?

The Bible teaches that a home that is in order can become a real place of manifold ministry. In the New Testament the home was:

- A. A place of refreshment (Acts 10:6).
- B. A place where the believers gathered for prayer (Acts 12:12).
- C. A place where bread was broken (Acts 2:46-47).

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

- D. A place of teaching and preaching (Acts 5:42; 20:20).

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Acts 5:42

- E. A place where the Spirit was outpoured (Acts 2:2; 10:44-46).
- F. A place where churches were started (Acts 18:7; Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2).

Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Romans 16:5a

IV. How does God want to use our homes?

- A. God wants every home to be a place where the principles of the Kingdom of God are lived out. Each home should be a showcase for Christian living. In this way our homes will become:
 - 1. A pattern of good works attracting the lost (Tit. 2:7-8).

2. A good testimony to those who are outside of the community of faith (II Cor. 8:21; I Tim. 3:7; Acts 22:12).
 3. A place where people will come for answers (I Pet. 3:15-16).
 4. A true manifestation of the wisdom of God (Col. 4:5; Eph. 3:10; Jam. 3:13).
- B. God wants every home to be a place from which we can reach out to our neighborhoods. They should be beacons of light to all who live around us. God gives us specific duties that we are to fulfill toward our neighbors.
1. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31,33; Rom. 13:9-10; Jam. 2:8; Gal. 5:14).
 2. We are to try to please them (Rom. 15:2).
 3. We are to deal honestly with them (Eph. 4:25).
 4. We are to be instrumental in teaching them (Heb. 8:11).
- C. God wants every home to be a place of reaching out to the poor and needy (Pro. 31:20).
1. This starts with the needy in the family circle itself (I Tim. 5:8).

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
 2. This extends to the other members of the body of Christ (I Cor. 16:15).

You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. –NIV
 3. This reaches beyond to the stranger outside (Gal. 6:10; I Th. 5:15).

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:10, NIV

V. Who are some good biblical examples of this kind of ministry?

- A. Abraham is a pattern of hospitality in his home when he entertained strangers (Gen. 18:1-8).

Abraham ran to greet them, he begged them to stay with him, he washed their feet, he gave them food and water and a place to rest.

- B. Elizabeth had a close relationship with not only her kindred but also all of her neighbors (Luke 1:56-58; Compare Luke 1:6).

C. Stephanas serves as one of the best examples (Note: Many commentators believe that this was the Philippian jailor converted under the ministry of Paul.).

1. He was a man who was personally responsive to the Lord (Acts 16:30-31).

And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household. Acts 16:30-34

2. He was a man who immediately got his own home in order (Acts 16:32-33; I Cor. 1:16).

3. He was a man who was reaching out to the needs of others (Acts 16:34).

4. He was a man who became addicted to the ministry of the saints (I Cor. 16:15).

I urge you, brethren--you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints--that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men. I Corinthians 16:15-18

5. He became a great help and strength to the apostle Paul (I Cor. 16:16-17).

6. He even helped pen the letter to the Corinthians (I Corinthians – subscription).

VI. What are some practical ways in which we can get more actively involved in outreach from our homes?

There are many things that we can do as believers. The following are only a few suggestions. You can add to your own list.

- A. Housing needy singles, whether they be newly converted or in need of a local parental oversight.
- B. Using your home as a center of hospitality, ministering to those who are in need of love and care.
- C. Reaching out to the older people in the Body of Christ and your neighborhood, serving them through acts of kindness.
- D. Establishing a healthy relationship with your neighbors.

1. Take time to get to know them.
 2. Help them with a project (i.e., canning, clean-up, etc.).
 3. Be ready to assist in times of need.
 4. Invite them to dinner.
 5. Visit when sick (and send a card).
 6. Remember them on special occasions.
 7. Talk to them when the occasion presents itself.
 8. Invite them along to special family or church functions.
 9. Be willing to help them with babysitting.
- E. Using your home for church functions.
1. Showers
 2. Small group meetings
 3. Prayer meetings
 4. Bible studies

The home is the place where true Christianity is displayed. People may question its authenticity in the church but when they see it in your home, they will be convinced (I Pet. 2:9-17).

Note: Most of the above material was extracted from a book no longer in print titled *Principles of Family Life*, which was published by City Bible Publishing and was authored by a team of writers including but not limited to the author of this teaching.