

*Equipped Through*

**The Christian Family**

Version 2.0

**Ronald Hogue**

Equippers Group International  
[www.equippersgroup.org](http://www.equippersgroup.org)

*Equipped Through **The Christian Family***

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Published by:  
Equippers Group International  
P.O. Box 399  
Euless, TX 76039 USA  
e-mail: [info@equippersgroup.org](mailto:info@equippersgroup.org)  
[www.equippersgroup.org](http://www.equippersgroup.org)

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ISBN 978-0-9788957-6-1

# Dedication

I dedicate this book to my wife,  
Jaylyne Hogue.



# Acknowledgment

Ron Hogue has been a Senior Pastor for almost 30 years serving churches in Texas, California and Vancouver, British Columbia. He is a national and international conference speaker and consultant who specializes in church growth, leadership development and spiritual renewal. Ron has been instrumental in developing leadership training schools which target indigenous pastors of predominately third-world countries. He has conducted leadership conferences and schools in Nepal, India, Thailand, Kenya, Nicaragua, Malaysia and Cambodia.

Ron is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He presently is the senior pastor of Restoration Church in Euless, Texas, and is founder and president of Nations Training Institute.

As a pastor, Ron is aware of the all too often breakdown of the Christian Family worldwide today. He has written this manual to train church leaders and couples about the importance of the Christian Family and to provide instructional material for their use.

In addition to our thanks to the author, we also extend thanks to those who have prayed for this writing project. It has taken many, many hours of writing, editing and perfecting to get to the place of publication. Most of all, we thank the Holy Spirit for His guidance on this very important subject.



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# Introduction

The Christian Family is under attack all over the world today. Why is the “Christian Family” so important? What does a Christian family actually look like? The Christian Family includes not only the husband and wife and their roles and responsibilities, it also includes children and extended family.

Marriage is not just a nice cultural ritual that evolved over time from generation to generation. Rather, **marriage is the basis for the healthy working of civilization itself**. It was established by God at creation. Marriage was intended to be the foundation upon which strong families are built. Without strong marriages, there will not be strong families. Without strong families, there will not be strong nations. Therefore, God wants people to understand His purposes for marriage.

**The first aspect of a Christian Family is the relationship of the husband and wife**. In this manual, you will learn why the Biblical definition of the marriage relationship is critical to a successful, God-honoring marriage.

**Marriage is the binding covenant agreement between  
one man and one woman  
who commit themselves before God to be  
each other's companion for life.**

There are many important words and phrases in this definition about which you will learn. These include:

- ✓ Binding
- ✓ Covenant agreement
- ✓ One man and one woman
- ✓ Commit themselves
- ✓ Before God
- ✓ Companion for life

This manual teaches the answers to the following questions.

- What are the reasons for marriage?
- What is the purpose of marriage?
- How can a couple build a strong marriage?
- Why is it important to have a strong Christian foundation in your marriage?
- What does “covenant” have to do with a successful marriage relationship?
- What are the guidelines and responsibilities for the husband and the wife?

**The other aspect of the Christian Family includes children.** This manual teaches you how to nurture your children to become God-honoring adults. You will learn the answers to these questions.

- How can you represent Christ to your children?
- How can you successfully parent your children in the world today?
- In what ways can you nurture your children to become mature Christian adults?
- Why is Biblical discipline of children important?
- What are the guidelines for fair discipline?

**Who can use this manual?** *The Christian Family* is applicable to people of all ages. For example, a pastor could teach it to the church as a whole or a mentor could use it for pre-marital counseling. It can be taught to parents to help them raise healthy children. *The Christian Family* has at least three audiences: Christian leaders (pastors and/or teachers), married couples and single men and women.

## **A. Overview of the manual’s content**

This manual is structured to provide lesson content in an easily understood format. Each lesson contains the following components:

## 1. Objectives

The objectives of each lesson are written from the student's perspective. Objectives answer the question: What will I learn in this lesson?

## 2. Key Verse

The key verse sets a Scriptural foundation for the lesson. The key verse is indicated by a picture of a key.



## 3. Bible quotes

The English version of this manual uses quotations from the *New International Version of the Bible*. If you have another Bible translation, read it too. You will gain more understanding from reading several translations of the Bible. Bible quotations will look like this.

*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." ... For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.  
(Genesis 2:18, 24)*

"Genesis" refers to a book in the Bible, the "2" refers to the chapter in Genesis, and ":18, 24" refers to the verses in that chapter. The "..." means there are verses that are not quoted. When explaining a topic, sometimes additional reference verses are given. They are noted as "📖 Read" or as "📖 See also." These verses may be read during or after class.

## 4. Tables

Tables are used in this manual because they have proven to be an easy way to view and understand long lists of information. Tables are numbered using first the lesson number, then the order of appearance in the lesson.

**Table 0.4 Example of a table**

	Example
--	---------

## 5. Diagrams

Diagrams are drawings or illustrations that represent a concept. They are numbered with the lesson number and then the order of appearance in the lesson.

## 6. Activities

The last part of the lesson contains two kinds of activities.

♥ **Discussion Points/Questions** – This activity is to be led by the teacher and discussed in class. These discussion points and questions will help students learn and understand the lesson content. In most cases, there are more discussion items than could be discussed in one class period. The teacher is free to choose the discussion points that best meet the needs of the class.

✍ **Application** – This activity is to be done by the student outside of class. These activities stimulate the student to implement truths in their personal life. The activity is designed to encourage the student to write their thoughts and ideas for future use. Each student may do these activities by themselves or in a small work group with other students.

Married students: Applications may be completed as a couple. Or, the husband and the wife can do the applications separately and then discuss together how they, as a couple, could implement these truths in their marriage.

Single students: Applications may be used to help single people realize the value of marriage. Through this study, they will better understand the kind of person with whom they want to spend the rest of their life.

## 7. Appendix

Appendix – Equippers Group International gives a brief explanation of EGI, the publishing organization of the Getting Equipped™ Series.

## **B. To the teacher**

This manual was designed to be used in different learning environments. Teachers are encouraged to adapt a method of teaching to accommodate the unique needs of the students. Consider the local economic, religious and political situations, learning styles and culture of the students. Teachers are encouraged to make these truths colorful through their insights and life experiences. The power of God is present in both the Word of God itself and the testimony of His believers.

### **1. Preparing to teach the lessons**

The teacher should prepare the lesson before class begins. A good teacher prepares a lesson as one making a soup: One starts with the liquid, adds ingredients, lets it simmer, tastes it and then adds spices. Lessons that have been prepared well in advance allow the Holy Spirit time to add “spice” to the lesson. The main ingredients in lesson preparation are study and prayer.

#### **a. Study the lesson**

1. Complete each lesson as if you were the student. Read through the lesson, looking up all the verses. Complete all activities before preparing to teach your class.
2. Consider the special needs of your students. Anticipate possible problems or questions that may come up.
3. It is important that you have adequate time to teach the content of the lesson. Some difficult lessons could be divided into two class sessions.
4. Prioritize the truths in each lesson in the event that you run out of time. Ask yourself: If a student leaves the class with only three truths, what should they be? Prepare your lesson to assure that important areas are covered first.
5. Consider how you will use the activities in class. Leave enough time for them. Feel free to add discussion questions that would be helpful to your students. When thinking about the activities, review the “Discussion

Points/Questions” and “Application” assignments from the previous week’s lesson.

6. Determine how you will organize the lesson. The presentation of the lesson’s content should be a blend of the following:
  - Review of previous lesson or lessons
  - Lecture that explains the key points of the lesson
  - Class discussion
7. Consider examples that are culturally relevant to your students. We hope that teachers will provide examples and illustrations that are meaningful to their students. Attempt to make these lessons more colorful through your insights and life experiences.

**b. Pray**

1. Pray specifically for those who will attend your class. Pray that the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit will teach them what they need to know.
2. Ask Jesus what He wants you to learn from the material.
3. Ask Jesus to give you the wisdom to know what parts of the lesson should be emphasized in class.
4. Ask Jesus to give you examples of how these truths are relevant to you and those in your community.

**2. Who should teach this manual?**

A teacher is one of the instruments God uses to instruct His people. The following teacher qualifications are to be used as guidelines. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is the true teacher of His people. The teacher is one who:

- is a believer in Jesus as Savior.
- continually studies the Scriptures. Jesus calls His followers “disciples,” which literally means “learners.”
- is committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

- teaches in such a way to encourage students to be followers of Jesus and not followers of the teacher.
- presents the Scriptures accurately, never distorting them for personal reasons.
- depends on the Holy Spirit, the true teacher, to give insight and knowledge to the students.
- avoids pride in their own skills or accomplishments.
- attempts to teach in a way that encourages students to teach others. Paul told Timothy:

*And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:2)*





# Lesson

# 1

## GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MARRIAGE

### Objectives

- To learn God's purpose for marriage
- To understand a strong marriage is built on God's wisdom, understanding and knowledge
- Learn that God created men and women different on purpose

### Key Verse

*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." ... For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.  
(Genesis 2:18, 24)*

### A. Purpose for marriage

God is a God of purpose. Everything He does has a reason. Everything He creates has a purpose. History has shown that when mankind does not understand the purpose for something, they eventually begin to pervert it. To "*pervert*" a thing means "*to distort it, to use it incorrectly or improperly.*"

For example, the purpose of clothing is to cover the body. God established that purpose in the Garden of Eden after the fall of Adam and Eve. There are some people, however, who attach significance and personal worth to clothing. Instead of being satisfied with the purpose of clothing, many people spend much of their money to buy clothes that are unnecessary. Therefore in this case, these people have perverted the use of clothing.

Another example is to pervert the act of sex. Sexual intimacy is intended to be a picture of the covenant of love that exists between a man and woman in the marriage relationship. God ordained this to be so. Many people have perverted sex to be something used just for personal pleasure. As a result of perverting this purpose, there is disease, unwanted pregnancies, broken marriages and orphaned children.

Something as basic as food can also be perverted when people violate its God-ordained purpose. Food is intended to give energy for the human body so people can live responsible and productive lives. Its purpose is **not** to satisfy their fleshly appetite. Yet, many people see food as something to crave for unhealthy reasons. Therefore, they eat too much of the wrong things. This can lead to physical disease and even death.

When people do not know God's purpose for a thing, they will relate to that thing incorrectly. This is true of the marriage relationship as well. Marriage is God's creation. Because of this, He has a very specific purpose for it. His purpose for marriage must be understood if couples are to avoid perverting it. The significance of the marriage relationship is seen in these two significant facts.

- **The marriage relationship is the foundation upon which the family is built.**
- **The family is the foundation upon which every society is built.**

Marriage is not just a nice cultural ritual that evolved over time from generation to generation. Rather, marriage is the basis for the healthy working of civilization itself. It was established by God at creation. Marriage was intended to be the foundation upon which

strong families are built. Without strong marriages, there will not be strong families. Without strong families, there will not be strong nations. Therefore, God wants people to understand His purposes for marriage.

## **B. Building a strong marriage**

*“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” (Matthew 19:4-6)*

This Scripture passage in Matthew reveals the heart of God concerning marriage.

Jesus repeated the Old Testament Scripture (Genesis 2:24) that said the husband and the wife shall become one flesh. Jesus went on to explain that God intended for that union to be permanent, until the death of one spouse (Matthew 19:8-9). Let no one separate this man and this woman.

**Why is it that so many marriages are struggling or falling apart?**

**The reason is because many husbands and wives do not know how to build their marriages according to Biblical principles.**

The question is: **Why is it that so many marriages are struggling or falling apart?** The reason is because many husbands and wives do not know how to build their marriages according to Biblical principles. The Bible gives a person all they need to know when it comes to building a home.

*By wisdom a house [home] is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures. (Proverbs 24:3-4)*

Solomon wrote this statement in his book of wisdom sayings called “Proverbs.” (Solomon is not speaking of a literal, physical house;

rather, he is speaking of a home.) A Christian home is a dwelling place where Godly people live with a spirit of power, order, care and significance.

The Scripture says that when God's will is understood and practiced in the home, that home will be "established." This word, "established," literally means "to set in order" or "to be upright, erect and stable." It speaks of something that is built properly so that it will last.

According to this Scripture passage, there are three things involved in building a strong and lasting home. They are **wisdom**, **understanding** and **knowledge**. These three parts answer a question and deals with a different aspect of marriage and the family. Table 1.1 outlines these aspects of building a strong home. Each one will be briefly discussed in the following text.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Aspect of marriage</b>	<b>Answers the question</b>
Wisdom	The purpose of God	What?
Understanding	The perspective of God	Why?
Knowledge	The instruction of God	How?

### **1. Wisdom: The purpose of God Answers the question: "What?"**

Wisdom is seeing life from God's point of view. "Wisdom" means "accumulated knowledge of life that has been gained through experience." A wise person wants to understand God's purposes and reasons for creating and establishing a thing. **What** is marriage? **What** is God's purpose for marriage? **What** is God's design for my marriage?

Marriage is not man's idea, it is God's creation. He is the one who established it. He had a reason for establishing it. The first wedding ceremony is recorded in Genesis 2:18-25. This Scripture passage gives the primary reasons for the creation of the marriage institution.

*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (Genesis 2:18-25 emphasis added)*

## **2. Understanding: The perspective of God** **Answers the question: "Why?"**

**Why** did God design marriage this way? **Why** did He create a male and female and place them together in marriage? **Why** is my wife the way she is? **Why** is my husband the way he is? How many times have you heard a wife say, "He does not understand me," or a husband say, "She does not honor me."

A couple needs to know that God made both of them unique. They each need to learn why their spouse acts or reacts the way they do. God made men and women extremely different.

When husbands and wives do not understand their unique differences, they will react to those differences. When this happens, conflict comes into the relationship and the home becomes a place of pain and frustration. However, when there is understanding, the couple establishes a peaceful and successful marriage. The more understanding that exists in a

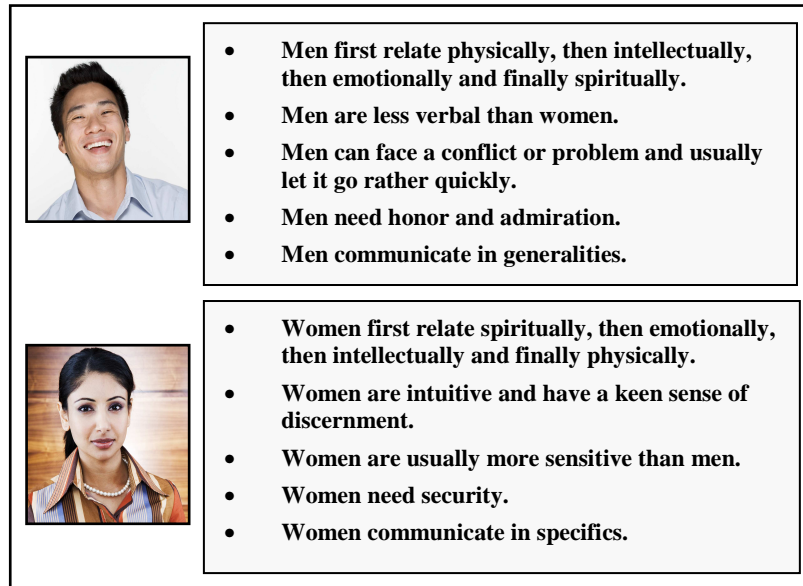
**The more understanding that exists in a relationship, the more reliable, firm and stable that relationship will become.**

relationship, the more reliable, firm and stable that relationship will become.

Men typically relate in an opposite way than women. They relate physically, intellectually, emotionally and then spiritually. That is why most men are very practical; they are not as concerned with how people feel as in fixing the problem.

Women, however, begin to relate at the spiritual level. They then move to relate emotionally, intellectually and finally physically. That is why women respond to a man who uses kind words, a loving touch and who understands their needs. Women are intuitive and have a keen sense of discernment.

#### **Diagram 1.1 Differences in how men and women relate**



Typically, men are less verbal than women. Women are usually more sensitive than men. Men can face a conflict or problem and usually let it go rather quickly. However, women usually have a harder time letting things go. They feel things deeply. Women need

security. Men need honor and admiration. Men communicate in generalities; women communicate in specifics.

The differences between men and women are many. Yet when God is in the midst of their marriage relationship, they compliment each other.

Someone has said that the man and woman together reflect the full nature of God. Mankind is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, the fullness of masculinity and femininity make up the relational aspects of God's nature. When a couple has a total understanding of one another from God's point of view, Solomon says they are ready to fill their rooms with "... *rare and beautiful treasures*" (Proverbs 24:4).

This is why it is very important that a husband understands his responsibilities before God in meeting the unique needs of his wife. This holds true for the wife as well in relating to her husband. Each spouse needs to know and understand the differences between a man and woman. Each spouse should learn how to relate to one another according to their unique needs.

Wisdom answers the question: "What?" Understanding answers the question: "Why?" The final ingredient to a home that is established is what Solomon calls "knowledge."

### **3. Knowledge: The instruction of God Answers the question: "How?"**

The word "how" is a practical word. It tells the specifics of how a couple can be successful in the marriage relationship. **How** can a husband fulfill his responsibilities to his wife? **How** should the wife relate to her husband? **How** can a couple get their marriage to a place of blessing if it is hurting? **How** can a husband love his wife like Christ loved the church? **How** can a wife submit to her husband in a way that pleases the Lord? **How** can a couple increase their intimacy with one another? **How** can they serve the Lord together? **How** can they parent together so their children will be healthy and strong?

The good news is that the Bible contains specific instructions to answer all these questions. The specifics concerning many of these questions will be discussed in the following lessons in this manual.

## SUMMARY

It is important to know that all three aspects of building a lasting marriage and family can be discovered and experienced because of God's grace.

- ✓ You can know God's purposes for marriage because of His wisdom.
- ✓ You can know God's perspective for marriage because He provides understanding.
- ✓ You can know God's instructions for marriage because He gives knowledge.

As a result, the marriage relationship and the home will be filled with good things and life will be rich indeed. The treasures of these relationships will be experienced and the peace of God will remain.

### ♥ Discussion Points/Questions

1. Marriage is considered the foundation of the family. Discuss the fact that successful families are the foundation on which society is built.
  - As more marriages in your community become successful, will your community change?
  - Will more successful marriages affect your nation?
2. In class, describe the main differences between men and women. Review Diagram 1.1. Discuss the following questions.
  - How do these differences between men and women affect a successful marriage?



- If a couple does not understand these differences, how could their marriage be adversely affected?
- When a couple does understand the unique nature of their spouse, how will their marriage be positively affected?

### **Application**

1. Read Proverbs 24:3-4 again. Consider how you can make your marriage stronger by adding more wisdom, understanding and knowledge. If you are married, discuss with your spouse. Make a list of some ways you can work together to strengthen your marriage.



## Lesson

# 2

## THE FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE

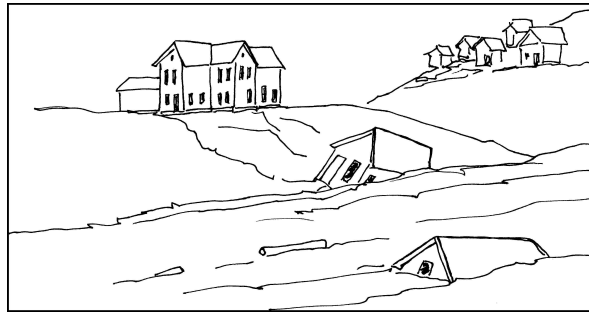
### Objectives

- To learn God's definition of marriage
- To understand that covenant is the foundation upon which marriage is built
- To know that the closer a couple is to Christ, the stronger their marriage relationship will be

### Key Verse

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." (Matthew 7:24-27)*

**Diagram 2.1**



**A home that is not built on biblical principles will not last. It is like a house built on sand.**

## **A. The foundation of marriage**

Every aspect of a person's life should be built upon a foundation that is reliable and strong. Foundations are intended to give stability and strength to the structures which are built upon them. In the key verse for this lesson, Jesus reveals that the foundation for life is nothing less than the Word of God. Jesus said that one should

**The foundation for life is nothing less than the Word of God.**

practice doing what God's Word says. This creates a foundation that enables them to withstand the storms of life. As explained in Lesson 1, the family is the

foundation of society. If that is true, then marriage becomes the foundation for the family. Understanding marriage as God defines it is critical for it to be the kind of foundation that establishes the family as a whole.

## **B. Definition of marriage**

The problem that is facing so many families today is that there is a huge misunderstanding as to what marriage actually is. People also have trouble understanding what God intended when He created the marriage relationship. Many couples try to build strong relationships, but they do not last. Primarily, this is because the **foundation** of their relationship is not properly built.

What makes a relationship between a man and woman a marriage? What makes marriage different than people of the opposite sex simply living together? They can both share the same house, food and bed yet still not be married. In fact, there are many men and women in the world who do just that. They live life together in a house doing all the things a husband and wife does, yet they are not married.

The thing that determines whether a man and woman ARE married can be summed up in one word: "COVENANT." The word "covenant" means "a formal, solemn, binding agreement, an agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action." Marriage is a divine covenant. If God is in the middle of this agreement, it becomes a divine agreement between the man and woman before God. Therefore, marriage can be defined by using the following definition.

**DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE**

**Marriage is the binding covenant agreement between one man and one woman who commit themselves before God to be each other's companion for life.**

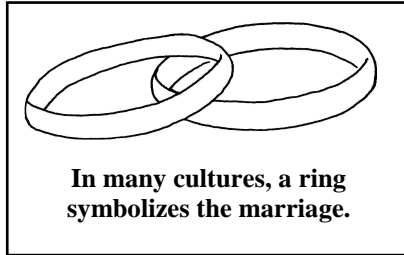
**1. Marriage: A covenant agreement**

God instituted marriage on the basis of a covenant agreement. When covenants were made in Bible times, they were taken very seriously. They were sacred and binding even to the point of death. Covenants were held together by one thing only: the verbal commitment of each person to fulfill their commitments and promises to the individual to whom they were making the covenant. If their word was not binding, their relationship would not be binding either. This is why marriage ceremonies include the exchanging of verbal promises called "vows." A husband

**God expects the obligations of the marriage covenant to be upheld as long as both the husband and wife are living.**

makes a vow (or promise) to take his bride as his wife. He vows to fulfill certain obligations to her as long as he lives. The bride, in turn, makes a vow (or promise) to fulfill certain obligations to her husband. She obligates herself to fulfill these commitments and responsibilities as long as she lives. These verbal commitments become the "covenant" that binds the husband and wife together for life. God expects the obligations of the marriage covenant to be upheld as long as both the husband and wife are living.

Many cultures have a visible symbol that identifies their covenant as



husband and wife. Often that symbol is a ring worn by both the husband and wife. The ring becomes a visible testimony to all who see it that they are obligated to one another for life as husband and wife. The obligation is the covenant they made before God.

God relates to mankind on the basis of covenant. Throughout history, He made a series of covenants with people with whom He had relationship. For example, there was a covenant made with Noah (Genesis 9:8-17), Abraham (Genesis 17:2-14), Moses (Exodus 6:2-8) and David (2 Samuel 7:8-16, Psalm 89:28-29).

## **2. Marriage: Spiritual picture of the New Covenant**

The greatest covenant was made through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Biblically, it was called "the New Covenant." (📖 See Hebrews 12:24, 8:7-13, Matthew 26:28 and Jeremiah 31:31.) The New Covenant was instituted by Jesus when He was sharing the Passover meal with His disciples in the upper room. (Matthew 26:17-30.)

In Jewish history, the Passover was a yearly celebration where the people remembered how God delivered the nation of Israel from bondage in Egypt through the leadership of Moses (Exodus 12). Through a special meal, Jewish families drink wine and eat bread to symbolically remember the night when God passed over their homes as the angel of God brought death to the first born of all

households in the nation of Egypt. It was that act of judgment that caused the Pharaoh of Egypt to release the people of Israel after having been slaves for four hundred years.

In this memorial meal, Jesus said the cup of wine that was shared by the disciples was to have a new meaning. The purpose of the cup was to remember His blood that would be shed on the cross for the sin of mankind. It was called the “blood covenant.” The promise of forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life would be ratified by the innocent blood Jesus would shed on the cross.

*Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:27-28)*

A follower of Christ can rest in the blessing of God’s love and the hope of heaven because of the covenant Jesus made on behalf of mankind. God has always been a covenant-making, as well as a covenant-keeping, God. Therefore, when a couple establishes a covenant between the husband and wife in marriage, it is a spiritual picture of God’s covenant-keeping nature. Covenant becomes God’s way of relating to people spiritually. Just as God makes promises through His Word that are binding and unchanging, He wants people to do the same in the marriage relationship. When people do not establish marriage upon this foundation of covenant, they violate the very nature of God in them.

Can you imagine how one would feel if God changed His mind about forgiving all of a person’s sins? Every part of the Christian life rests on the fact that God does not lie and is committed to keeping His covenant. The Christian couple should reflect that part of God’s character and nature in their marriage relationship as well. Christian marriage should be a spiritual picture of the relationship Jesus has with His bride, the church.

### **3. Marriage: Covenant and companionship**

There are two verses in Scripture that speak specifically about the covenant of a man and woman in marriage. Unfortunately, both of the verses are negative testimonies that talk about failed marriages.

*For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. ... Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways. It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has **left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God.** (Proverbs 2:6, 12-17 emphasis added)*

This Scripture passage speaks of a woman who leaves her husband and commits adultery. Notice the phrases: “*partner of her youth,*” and “*the covenant she made before God.*” The word “partner” as used here can also be translated as “companion.” Both thoughts define clearly what God thinks about marriage. It is a covenant of companionship. Divine covenant is at the heart of marriage.

The following Scripture passage addresses a husband who has forsaken the heart of marriage and has divorced his wife.

*Another thing you do: You flood the LORD'S altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, “Why?” It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though **she is your partner [companion], the wife of your marriage covenant.** Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, “and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. (Malachi 2:13-16 emphasis added)*

Once again, the concepts of covenant and companionship are mentioned. According to this passage, God hates divorce. Divorce

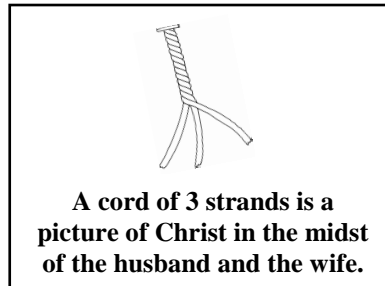


is the official ending of a marriage. Divorce is against everything for which God stands. When a couple divorce, they are not only violating their covenant with one another, but they are violating their covenant with God as well. Therefore, there is the breaking of two covenants. They are also saying that God is not big enough or strong enough to heal their relationship. This is why a husband and wife will only hold their marriage together when they keep their covenant with God first. Without God's power and strength in the relationship, it could easily fall apart. Listen to the truth found in the following verses written by Solomon.

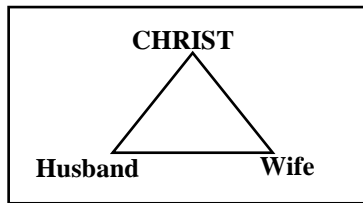
*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)*

Solomon said that when two people work together, helping each other and protecting one another, they are better able to deal with the challenges of life. But he then introduces a third person. He calls that person the third strand of a cord or rope. **It is the third strand that keeps the other two from breaking when the pressure of life comes.**

In marriage, that "third strand" is a picture of Christ in the midst of the husband and wife. **Jesus is the one who holds the couple together when the pressure comes.** If the couple does not know how to include Christ in their relationship with one another, there is a great chance that their relationship could be torn apart. This concept is called "the marriage triangle." Diagram 2.2 illustrates this concept.



## Diagram 2.2 The marriage triangle



This diagram shows that Christ is the one who completes the relationship of the husband and wife. In addition to this, the closer a husband and wife are to Christ, the closer they become to one

another. When they are able to recognize Christ in their relationship, He not only gives them the grace they need for each day, but He is able to fight their battles. His authority and power become active in the lives of the husband and wife.

- There is no sin that His grace will not cover.
- There is no offense that His love will not forgive.
- There is no problem His wisdom cannot solve.
- There is no pain His presence cannot heal.
- Jesus Christ becomes the “rock” that cannot be moved; it is the rock on which the marriage foundation is built (Matthew 7:24-27)

Jesus is determined to fulfill His will and destiny in the lives of the husband and wife. A Christian expert on marriage says that he has found a secret to strong, healthy and long lasting marriages. He says, "Simply put, the stability of marriage is a by-product of an iron-willed determination to make it work. In other words, **quitting or divorcing is not an option**. There needs to be a predetermined commitment from both the husband and wife. No matter what problems or difficulties arise, they will be committed to working them out together with God's help. When a major difficulty arises between the couple, their efforts should NOT lead to ending the relationship. Instead, they should be committed to find God's wisdom and strength in healing their relationship.

## SUMMARY

In summary, one has learned the following principles:

- ✓ The integrity and strength of everything built in life is determined by the foundation upon which it is built.
- ✓ The foundation upon which marriage is built is covenant. Without it, marriage has no strength.
- ✓ The power of this covenant is found in the Christian couple doing the things God asks of them in the relationship.
- ✓ Beyond that, their covenant relationship will be protected as they seek Christ first in their personal lives and allow Him to be central in their relationship with one another.

When these things are in place, God's promise to the husband and wife is clear. No storm in life will ever have the power to destroy their relationship or their home. They will live under the blessing of God. It is then that God is pleased.

### ♥ Discussion Points/Questions

1. Discuss the following definition of marriage:

*Marriage is the binding covenant agreement between one man and one woman who commit themselves before God to be each other's companion for life.*

- What part does "covenant" play in the marriage relationship between the husband and the wife? Remember, in this lesson, "covenant" is defined as a *binding agreement between two people*.
- Why is "commitment" important in marriage? Who is to make this commitment – the husband or the wife, or both?
- Discuss the fact that a marriage provides a companion for the husband and the wife for life. What is a companion? How is the companion instructed to treat their spouse? Why is this so important?

2. Read Malachi 2:13-16 where God said He hates divorce.
  - Discuss how a couple can avoid divorce.
  - What are the consequences of a husband or wife breaking their covenant with one another?
  
3. Review Diagram 2.1, the marriage triangle.
  - Discuss the fact that a marriage will become stronger as the husband and wife grow closer to Christ.
  - Who is represented in this “cord of three strands?”
  - Discuss the concept that a “cord of three strands” is strong and will not unravel.

### **Application**

1. Prayerfully consider your own marriage. Does your marriage line up with the definition presented in this lesson? Write your thoughts.
  
2. Discuss with your spouse how your marriage can be improved. Are you good companions? As a couple, do you reflect Christ-like character? If not, discuss how you can improve this situation.

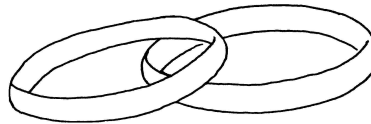
## Lesson

# 3

## MARRIAGE COVENANT

### Objectives

- To learn more about covenant
- To understand the husband is responsible to be the head of the family
- To learn there is power and protection in the marriage covenant
- To learn there are consequences when the covenant is broken



### Key Verse

*“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” (Matthew 19:4-6)*

## A. The power of covenant

A promise is made powerful when the person making the promise actually does what they say they will do. Covenant is kept by conduct. As simple as it may seem, the power of covenant is found in the character of the person making the promise. Their word literally becomes their solemn (or sacred) promise.

This is especially true of a husband and wife accepting their unique responsibilities before God in the marriage relationship. Every covenant in the Bible contained promises and obligations that defined what each person in the covenant agreement was obligating themselves to do.

The marriage covenant is no different. In marriage, both the husband and wife have instructions given by God to which they obligate themselves to follow. When they do what God asks in relationship to one another, the power of their covenant is activated to one another. What keeps a husband from having sex with women other than his wife? It is the power of covenant. What keeps a wife faithful to her husband and children even though times get hard? It is the power of covenant.

The covenant becomes an anchor that keeps the couple from moving apart during the most difficult times in life. There may be times when either the husband or the wife wants to leave their spouse. In those times, the thing that gives them the grace and ability to stay is one thing: the covenant made before God. When the married couple makes a determination to do what God asks them to do in their relationship, then the power of their covenant begins to be experienced.



Many times when couples are having problems in their marital relationship, they want to highlight the faults of the other person. They want to be an expert on their spouse's responsibilities and not their own. This is not wise or productive. **Each person is accountable to God for how he or she acts and responds.** A person only has the power to change themselves and respond to

God individually and personally. A husband cannot change his wife. A wife cannot change her husband. Prayer is the power of change. Only God has the power to change a person from the inside. Each person needs to be able to go to bed at night knowing that they have a clear conscience before God. They need to know they have fulfilled their God-given responsibilities concerning their marriage.

If a married couple is having terrible problems in their relationship, the following question could be asked: What percentage of the problem in your relationship is your fault, and what percentage is your spouse's? If the husband says that eighty percent is his wife's problem and twenty percent is his problem, then it is his priority and responsibility to work on his twenty percent. That is the amount for which he will be accountable to God. This would be true for the wife as well. Throughout the course of this study, one will learn the responsibilities of the husband and wife before God in the marriage relationship. The power of covenant is experienced when the husband and wife actually perform these responsibilities.

## **B. The protection of covenant**

If there is one thing the enemy, Satan, would desire to do, it would be to tear apart the husband and wife. The marriage covenant is under great attack all over the world. In fact, Jesus alluded to this in Matthew's gospel when He was asked whether it was ever appropriate for a married couple to divorce. In His response, Jesus repeats Old Testament Scripture (Genesis 2:24) and reveals the heart of God and a danger concerning marriage.

*"... 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore **what God has joined together, let man not separate.**"*  
(Matthew 19:5-6 emphasis added)

God's heart for marriage is that the marriage covenant never be broken. God is the one who joins the husband and wife together. It is His desire that their union never be torn apart. The danger Jesus implies in the previous Scripture is that there will always be people who will try to

**God's heart for marriage is that the marriage covenant never be broken.**

tear apart the marriage relationship. Therefore, each husband and wife needs to commit themselves to fight against any force that would desire to tear them apart. Proper spiritual protection and covering is required for their covenant to remain strong.

## 1. Spiritual protection: The marriage is “covered”

**What is a “spiritual covering” for marriage?** The best way to illustrate this concept is by using the analogy of a roof. What does a roof do? It covers those inside the house. From what does it cover them? It covers the people inside from weather that can bring harm. People need protection from the wind, rain, heat and cold. A roof provides a refuge and a shelter. Couples need a spiritual roof, or spiritual covering. It provides protection for their relationship.

This “covering” of the marriage is obtained by a spiritual intimacy together with Christ. Both the husband and wife need to develop their individual, personal walks with Christ. When this happens, there is a power and strength that keeps the enemy out of their hearts and out of their relationship. Most of the attacks that Christian couples face are in their own hearts. **Therefore, keeping personal intimacy with Christ as a priority is essential if their covenant with each other is to be protected.**

Over time, things can happen in life that might cause a husband and wife to become angry, bitter, frustrated, rejected and judgmental

- **Read God’s Word together**
- **Pray together**

**These disciplines allow Jesus Christ to protect their hearts and their home.**

towards one another. Unless these enemies of the heart are faced with God’s wisdom and grace, they will undermine the marriage relationship. Couples should take time to read God’s Word and to pray together. There should never be a day that

passes that they do not pray together. When facing critical decisions, they should first allow the Bible to give them wisdom in those decisions. These disciplines allow Jesus Christ to be Lord, the boss of their life. He can then protect their hearts and their home.



## 2. The husband: head of the wife and home

The Bible says the husband is to be the head of the wife and the home. This means that it is the husband's primary responsibility to cover his wife and children. He is called "the head" of his wife and home by God (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 11:3). Many men uncover their families by not taking their responsibilities seriously.

Once, Jesus was addressing spiritual warfare issues with a group of Pharisees (Jewish religious leaders). These misled religious leaders began wrongly accusing Jesus of casting out demons using the power of the ruler of demons, Beelzebub. While discussing these issues and bringing clarification to their wrong thinking, Jesus unveiled a very important spiritual principle.

*Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or again, **how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.**" (Matthew 12:22-29 emphasis added)*

From this illustration, Jesus reveals an important thought that husbands and fathers need to heed. The home cannot be plundered by an enemy unless the strong man, (the husband) is bound. Many times husbands and fathers allow themselves to be bound. When a husband or father allows himself to be bound spiritually or emotionally, it forces his wife to become the head of the home. This

means she is forced to make decisions she should not have to make. She has to fight battles that God never intended her to fight.

### **3. Covenant broken: the marriage is NOT covered**

**What does it mean for a husband to be bound?** Practically speaking, it means he is not free to fulfill the responsibilities in his home that God has given him. How did he lose that freedom? He lost this freedom by allowing things into his life which resulted in his being restricted, bound and unable to be the spiritual leader of his home. When the husband is bound, his wife and children are not protected, they are uncovered. He has essentially broken the marriage covenant. Some of these things happen innocently. Others take place because he has made wrong choices and has chosen to walk in sinful behavior.

**What causes a husband to forfeit God's cover for his family?** What kinds of things bind him, or restrict him, so that he fails to fulfill his responsibilities as head of the home. Table 3.1 gives a partial list of examples of some things that can bind men and cause them to not cover their families spiritually.

**Table 3.1 Conduct of spiritually bound men**

- There may be an over-commitment of time and energy to work or ministry.
- There may be a failure to deal with personal insecurities and weaknesses. These can include anger, procrastination, laziness, fear, intimidation and rejection.
- There may be a preoccupation with personal hobbies and recreational pursuits.
- He may allow sin issues to exist. Some of these could include drinking, gambling, pornography, immorality, drug addiction and verbal or physical abuse.
- There may be a misuse of financial provision.
- He may have a weak and inconsistent walk with God.

Spiritual responsibility exercised by the husband is what brings covering to the home. Husbands and fathers should pray daily for their families. If possible, it is good for the husband to pray over his children at night before they go to bed. He should also take the initiative to pray with his wife each night as well. Husbands should be the obvious spiritual leaders of the home. When these things happen, the couple experiences oneness between them.

**Spiritual responsibility exercised by the husband is what brings covering to the home.**

A good contrast that illustrates this principle is that of two Old Testament husbands: Job and the father of Moses. In the book of Job, one has an unusual look into the spiritual world as Satan has a conversation with God. Satan cannot attack Job or his family because God has set a hedge, or wall, of protection around them. A possible reason for this is found in Job 1.

*When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom. ... "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land." (Job 1:5, 9-10)*

It was Job's regular custom to rise early in the morning and pray in behalf of his wife and children. In fact, he would intercede to God for his children in case they had sinned against God. Job was very connected with God. He constantly thought about God's will. According to this passage, he honestly feared God. This was more than the fear of God's presence, power and majesty. Job revered God and desired to please Him. He actively sought God in his daily life. His spiritual

**Job's spiritual walk with God established a covering of protection over his family and brought blessing to his home.**

walk with God established a covering of protection over his family and brought blessing to his home.

However, looking into the life of Moses, one sees a different story. At that time, Israel was in bondage in the nation of Egypt. (📖 See Exodus 1.) The king of Egypt, Pharaoh, decided that there were too many young boys being born to the Israelites. Therefore, he ordered that all young boys be killed by the midwives. The midwives were instructed to throw the baby boys into the Nile River. During this intense time of killing these babies, Moses was born to a Jewish priest. In other words, his father was an official religious leader to the Jewish people. What would you think this man of God would do in order to protect his child from death?

*Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. (Exodus 2:1-4)*

Where was the priest? Where was the father? Moses was a baby marked by destiny. His father was oblivious to this fact and did nothing to protect him. Instead, it was the mother who ended up saving their son and allowing God to direct his destiny. She had to take responsibility that was not hers.

#### **4. Spiritual protection: husband to guard and serve his family**

One of the things men do not realize is that they are stewards of destiny. God gives them wives and children because He wants to use them in very strategic ways. It is the responsibility of every husband and father to guard the divine destiny of his family. Many Christian men think their families exist to serve them. In reality, it is just the opposite. A man is called to serve his family. Job

**It is the responsibility of every husband and father to guard the divine destiny of his family.**

is a good illustration of this. Job covered his family by being committed to his walk with God. The father of Moses did not.

Family relationships have to be protected because they are under constant attack. The starting point for the Satan, the enemy, is the marriage relationship. When both the husband and wife determine to seek Christ in their personal lives, first and foremost, the enemy will have no place to enter. The divine covenant that binds them together will keep them and empower them. Beyond this, the very presence of Christ in their relationship becomes that “third strand” that causes their relationship to remain unbroken.

## SUMMARY

In summary, one has learned the following principles:

- ✓ Power of covenant is found in the character of the people making their covenant promises.
- ✓ Both the husband and the wife have instructions given by God to which they obligate themselves to follow. When they do what God asks in their relationship to one another, the power of their covenant is activated to one another.
- ✓ Satan desires to tear the marriage apart.
- ✓ As the husband and the wife keep personal intimacy with Christ as a priority, their covenant with each other will be protected.
- ✓ Couples should read God’s Word and pray together. When they do these disciplines, Jesus Christ becomes boss of their life and can then protect their hearts and their home.
- ✓ Spiritual responsibility exercised by the husband is what brings covering to the home.

### ♥ Discussion Points/Questions

1. Discuss the power of covenant in a marriage.
  - Review the definition of covenant found in Section B of Lesson 2?

- Discuss the fact that the character of the people making the covenant is important to the power of that covenant. Will the marriage covenant remain powerful if either the husband or the wife breaks their promise?
  - How can the disciplines of praying together and reading God's Word together strengthen their covenant to each other and to God?
2. Read Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3 in class in which the Bible says the husband is the head of the wife and the home. Discuss how the husband is to carry out this instruction to "cover" the wife and the home?
  3. Review Table 3.1.
    - Discuss the kinds of things that can cause a husband to be spiritually bound so he cannot fulfill his responsibilities to "cover" the home.
    - Discuss how each one of these situations could change so the husband would not be bound and the home would not be "uncovered."

### **Application**

1. Review Table 3.1 again. As a husband, what changes do you need to make to assure that your wife and family are covered? Write them on a piece of paper. If you are unmarried, consider carefully the things listed in Table 3.1 that could cause you to be unable to cover your future family.
2. Identify the things that threaten the stability of your household. How can you stand against these things to guard and serve your family?

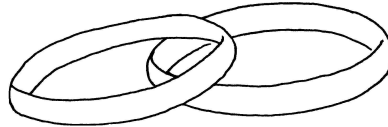
## Lesson

# 4

## HOW MARRIAGE WORKS

### Objectives

- To learn how to build a marriage relationship that cannot be shaken
- To understand the wealth and purpose of children
- To learn that your family will be a witness of Christ to the community



### Key Verse

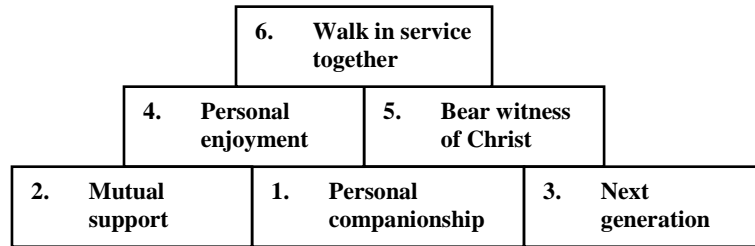
*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18)*

### A. Reasons for marriage

God had a reason for creating marriage. The key verse says God realized Adam needed a companion, a helper. So, God created woman to help Adam and work with him.

This lesson focuses on six primary reasons God created marriage as shown in Diagram 4.1. Each one will be briefly discussed in this lesson.

**Diagram 4.1 Six primary reasons God created marriage**



### 1. Personal companionship

1. Personal companionship

In Genesis 1, God says six times that creation was "good." Then, in Genesis 2:18 He says, "*It is not good.*" He said, "*It is not good that the man should be alone.*" God created Eve to be a companion for Adam.

The very essence of mankind is that people are relational creatures. They were not created to live in isolation. People need to relate to other people. They need companionship. They need committed and supportive relationships. A person needs a relationship that will compliment them.

God intended that marriage partners become the primary source of companionship for each other throughout life. Each spouse is meant to meet their mate's primary relational needs. Husbands and wives are intended to be best friends. They are meant to know how to

**Husbands and wives are intended to be best friends.**

communicate with one another and enjoy each other's company. Numerous studies have been conducted to determine why some marriages are healthy and successful while others end

in tragic divorce. The number one reason given by successful couples whose marriages have endured the difficulties of life is that they are best friends.



## 2. Mutual support

2. Mutual support	1. Personal companionship
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God created mankind to need companionship and help. When God said He would make a helper for Adam (Genesis 2:18), He was actually saying, "I will make a helper suitable (or perfectly designed) for him."

One thing marriage does to each spouse is to kill an unhealthy independent spirit. Marriage also kills a sense of self-centeredness. God puts a man and a woman together in a marriage relationship so they will have a constant support base upon which to live life. He wants the couple to feel that someone will always be there to help them, encourage them, correct them and challenge them when the need arises. The pressure and load of life is lessened when a man or woman has the spouse given by God to help them.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus spoke very specifically of marriage. He talked about the relationship being permanent, until the death of one of the spouses.

*"So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." (Matthew 19:6)*



**Oxen are yoked together to share the burden.**

The word "joined" is a word which literally means "yoked." The image is of a pair of oxen that are placed together in a device called the "yoke." The yoke harnesses the pair of animals together so they can plow a field with less effort. By sharing the load, it lessens the load of each animal.

One application of this verse is that every couple has a "load" to carry through life. When they are joined together in God, that load is shared by the other. There are times when the pressures and stress of life increase dramatically. Children come. Sickness comes. Tragedy comes. Unexpected challenges come. The marriage relationship enables the husband and wife to lean on each other during these challenging seasons of life. The blessing of the marriage relationship is knowing that there will always be that one

person upon which a spouse can depend regardless of the storms that come into your life.

When a couple learns how to serve one another and share the responsibilities in the home, it becomes a much better place to live. God designed people to need the help and support of one another. One reason many marriages experience conflict is that the couples are unclear as to what their responsibilities are. Sometimes, they become selfish and do not fulfill their duties as husband or wife. For example, consider the concept of the previous illustration

**God designed people to need the help and support of one another.**

concerning the yoke and the oxen. When the husband and wife (like the oxen) share the load and accept their responsibilities, the journey in life is not only tolerable, but can also be enjoyable. But if one or both do not fulfill their responsibilities, their stress and hardships are increased. These primary responsibilities will be defined in Lessons 5 and 6 so both the husband and the wife can begin serving one another.

### 3. Next generation: child bearing and child rearing

2. Mutual support	1. Personal companionship	3. Next generation
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*God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28)*

This Scripture says that one purpose for marriage is for the husband and wife to have children. As those who love God, the couple has the privilege of leading their children to Christ. Parents are responsible to establish them in the truth of God's Word. Children are to grow up to know God and learn how to be responsible, godly adults. The Bible contains specific instructions given to parents concerning their children. Some of these instructions follow.

*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)*

*He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them even the children yet to be born and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. (Psalm 78:5-7)*

📖 See also Deuteronomy 6:7, 20 and Proverbs 22:6.

The family is intended to be the training ground for children to learn how to relate with other people. It also helps them make responsible decisions, be educated and learn about life from God's point of view. God wants to be God of all generations. For example, as told in the book of Genesis, God established His covenant with Abraham. He extended that covenant to Abraham's son (Isaac) and grandson (Jacob). Therefore, He was not just the God of Abraham. He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 📖 See Genesis 15, 17:9-14 where God extended His covenant with Abraham to his descendants and generations to come.

God wants to have relationship with children. Children who are brought into the world are placed into the safety and protection of the home where a husband and wife can care for them. It is not God's perfect plan that children be raised by only one parent, or to have no parents at all. Sometimes this situation takes place and God's grace is able to help the single parent. **However, when both a husband and wife share the responsibilities of parenting, children feel the strength, love and support that God intended.**

A Godly marriage is the environment in which God chose for children to be raised. Every child is born with a divine destiny to fulfill. They are God's future leaders who will impact nations provided they

**Children are God's  
future leaders who will  
impact nations.**

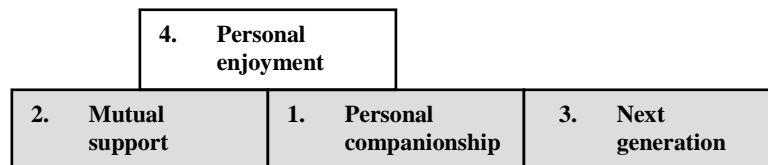
are nurtured properly by their parents. The Bible instructs parents to be good stewards to raise children for God. Children are a gift from God. Parents are responsible to train their children in godly attitude and behavior. Parents are intended to be an example to demonstrate Godly behavior to their children.

*Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. (Psalm 127:3)*

In some cultures, children are not valued. Many times they are considered a burden and are treated with a lack of concern. Some nations have even restricted how many children a couple can have. This is a violation of God's plan and purpose. Children – both sons and daughters – are to be valued as a nation's greatest asset. They will determine the future of that nation. It takes energy, money and time to raise children the way God instructs.

Some couples refuse to have children because of selfishness. They desire their personal freedom, wealth, independence and time more than having children. This is a violation of God's heart. In fact, many couples who cannot have children because of physical limitations can still parent those who are orphans. The right of every child is to have parents. Psalm 127:3, as previously quoted, tells that couples create a heritage and are rewarded by God when they have children. Children are gifts to be treasured and cherished. When a married couple has children, they are fulfilling one of God's purposes for the marriage relationship.

#### **4. Personal enjoyment**



God wants marriage, which is the deepest of all relationships, to produce enjoyment. He does not want marriage to be a prison. Unfortunately, many married couples do not enjoy their marriage relationship and wish they could escape from it. God certainly does not want that kind of attitude to exist between the husband and the wife. He wants their relationship to be satisfying and enjoying.

Once again, one must consider how a couple builds their home. Enjoyment is found in spending time together, developing interests together and even extends to the sexual relationship. The

enjoyment found in sexual intimacy is to be experienced in the marriage relationship exclusively. A man or woman is not to look anywhere else for sexual fulfillment outside of their marriage relationship. To do this is to walk in open rebellion and sin. It is a violation of their covenant to one another.


*May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man’s wife? For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths. (Proverbs 5:18-21)*

As a husband and wife develop their friendship with each other, their sexual life together will be more satisfying as well. They do not have a desire to go anywhere else to find sexual fulfillment. True friendship between a husband and wife becomes a strong safeguard for their marriage especially in the area of sexual purity.

<b>4. Personal enjoyment</b>		<b>5. Bear witness of Christ</b>	
<b>2. Mutual support</b>	<b>1. Personal companionship</b>	<b>3. Next generation</b>	

## 5. Bear witness of Christ and the church

*“FOR THIS REASON A MAN WILL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE UNITED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO WILL BECOME ONE FLESH.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:31-33, emphasis added)*

 To understand the context of what Paul is sharing, read Ephesians 5-6. Pay particular attention to Ephesians 5:22-33.

In Ephesians 5-6, the apostle Paul addresses family roles and responsibilities. One important aspect of marriage is that the husband and the wife are instructed to leave their parents' authority and cleave to each other. To "cleave" means "to *cling closely, steadfastly, or faithfully to somebody or something.*" The husband and wife are no longer children; they now become a new family unit apart from their parents. They are now responsible to establish their own home on godly principles.

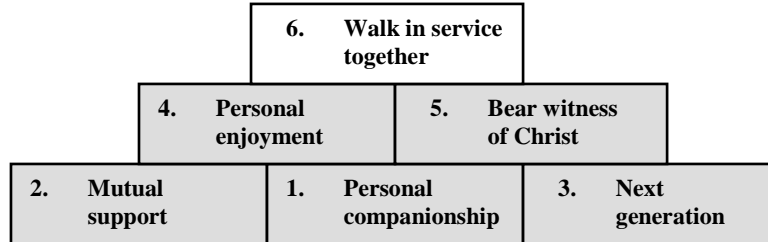
In this Scripture passage, Paul compares the relationship of Christ and the church with the husband and wife relationship. He says that the husband/wife relationship is an earthly picture of how Christ relates to His bride, the church. God has established the Christian marriage to be an open testimony of the love Christ has for His church and how the church should honor and obey Christ. In a sense, marriage becomes an object lesson to instruct how the body of Christ is to relate to Jesus. Consider how the following points relate to marriage and to the church, the body of Christ.

- **Covenant** – Covenant is the basis for marriage. (Matthew 19:5-6, Genesis 2:24) Covenant is also the basis for a person's commitment to Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 8:6-13, Matthew 26:28)
- **Headship** – Headship establishes the husband as the leader in the home. Headship establishes Jesus as the leader of the church. (Ephesians 5:23)
- **Love** – Love is what gives husbands the power to lead. The love of God in Christ is what draws people to Himself. (Ephesians 5:25-28, 33)
- **Submission** – The wife should submit to her own husband out of respect and love. The church should submit to Christ out of respect and love. (Ephesians 5:24)
- **One body** – In the same way, the Bible says that the husband and wife cease to be two and become one flesh. Jesus said that believers are one body in Christ. In other words, there is a union that cannot be broken. (Ephesians 5:29-30)

**The Christian marriage should be a spiritual picture of how Christ and the church should relate to one another.**

Therefore, when married couples teach their children how to love Christ and submit to Him, they should be able to point to their marriage as an example. The marriage of pastors, church leaders and mature Christians should also present this spiritual picture when teaching young believers how the body of Christ is to relate to Jesus.

## 6. Walk in service together



In Genesis 1, God reveals another reason why He created the institution of marriage.

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:27-28)*

This Scripture passage tells that God wanted both the man and the woman, or husband and wife, to fulfill together the responsibility to subdue and rule over the earth. They were called together, not separately. When God puts a man and woman together, He has divine purposes for both of them. For example, a pastor's wife is just as important as a pastor because she has been called not only to serve her husband and his call, but to fulfill her call to service also. In the New Testament, Peter referred to this concept when he was instructing husbands to treat their wives correctly.

*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect [honor] as the*

*weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (1 Peter 3:7)*

In this Scripture passage, Peter said that wives are to treat their wives with “respect.” Another way of translating “respect” is to use the word “honor.” Peter says that the wife should receive respect (honor) because she is a fellow heir of the grace of life. In other words, not only is the wife a part of God’s family, she is also an heir of God’s grace. They have an inheritance in Christ that is realized in service right now. Husbands are to support their wives as they seek and find God’s will for their lives. The husband should then release his wife to fulfill that call in her life

One can see this truth operational in the life of a husband and wife in the book of Acts. This couple, Aquila and Priscilla, heard a man preaching the things of Jesus Christ, yet some of those things needed correcting and adjusting. 📖 Read Acts 18 to understand this story in context.

*Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. (Acts 18:24-26)*

It was not the husband alone who helped this man. Both Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, worked as a team together to help Apollos. It is very important for couples to consider the call of God upon their lives when looking at why they are together. Ultimately, both the husband and the wife are called to serve God. The Lord Jesus desires husbands and wives to do this together. Many times, He actually puts certain men and women together in a covenant marriage relationship because of the service they are called to perform. They cannot afford to get jealous of one another or resent one another. Rather, the husband and wife should serve the grace of God together.



One danger some couples face is that they begin to live separate lives in service to God. For example, the husband may be involved in service to the church as a pastor or teacher. The wife may be involved in service to the church in music. They both spend a lot of time doing their service, but do not take time to spend with each other. Sometimes they use this service to Christ as an excuse to not fulfill their responsibilities to one another in the home. Service in Christ should never be a point of separation. Service should never violate the primary responsibility of being husband and wife.



An unhealthy and failing marriage seriously damages a believer's witness to others. If a man or a woman loses their marriage, they will lose some of their witness of Christ in their community. They could also lose their particular area of service to Christ as well.

For example, if the marriage of a Christian couple fails, their witness (reputation) to their community fails also. Perhaps this couple is a leader of the community and teaches that marriage is a spiritual picture of how Christ cares for His church. Then, their marriage begins to be filled with distrust, disloyalty, hurt and problems. Consequently, their witness to people in their community who do not know Christ is damaged.

What should a couple do if this happens? If a couple finds that their marriage has problems, they should work together to resolve the problems. Part of this work would include reading God's Word together and prayer. Then, they should discuss their commitment to each other. The next step is to repent and ask forgiveness from each other. Finally, they should make a plan so that each one will be a correct witness in their service to Christ.

Serving God together as a couple should be done with great consideration, balance and prayer. Ultimately, both the Christian husband and wife are meant to serve God. The most fulfilling marriages are those that serve Christ together.

A summary of the purposes for marriage can be made by using the following statements. God created the marriage relationship in order for people:

- ... to have a friend.
- ... to have help.
- ... to have children.
- ... to have fun.
- ... to have a witness.
- ... to have service to Christ.

## **SUMMARY**

Referring to Lesson 1, the first part of making marriage strong and lasting is what Solomon calls "wisdom." It has answered the question: What are the purposes of marriage? The second part that establishes the marriage is what Solomon calls "understanding." This has answered the question: Why did God create marriage to be designed the way He did?

Lessons 5-6 will teach the instructions of God. They will answer the question: How can the husband the wife have a successful marriage?

It is important to know that the reasons for marriage are:

- ✓ Personal companionship
- ✓ Mutual support
- ✓ Next generation: child bearing and child rearing
- ✓ Personal enjoyment
- ✓ Bear witness of Christ and the church
- ✓ Walk in service together

When the couple works together in these areas, the home will be filled with good things and life will be rich indeed. The treasures of these relationships will be experienced and the peace of God will remain.

## ♥ Discussion Points/Questions

1. This lesson gives six purposes of marriage as shown below. Read the associated Scriptures and discuss why each one is important to a successful marriage. The teacher may want to divide the class into six groups. Have each group discuss and report their findings back to the entire class.
  - Personal companionship (Genesis 2:18)
  - Mutual support (Genesis 2:18, Matthew 19:6)
  - Next generation: child bearing and child rearing (Genesis 1:28, Ephesians 6:4, Psalm 78:5-7, Psalm 127:3)
  - Personal enjoyment (Proverbs 5:18-21)
  - Bear witness of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33)
  - Walk in service together (Genesis 1:27-28, 1 Peter 3:7, Acts 18:24-26)
2. Read Ephesians 5:22-33. Review the text in Section 5, Bear witness of Christ and the church. Discuss how a marriage can reflect to others the relationship Jesus has with His bride, the church? Consider the following ideas relating to these relationships as stated in this Scripture:
  - Covenant (Matthew 19:5-6, 26:28, Genesis 2:24, Hebrews 8:6-13)
  - Headship (Ephesians 5:23)
  - Love (Ephesians 5:25-28, 33)
  - Submission (Ephesians 5:24)
  - One body (Ephesians 5:29-30)

## Application

1. If you are married, which of the six purposes of marriage is most evident in your marriage? Which is most lacking? Discuss these answers with your spouse. Write your thoughts. Together, pray and ask Jesus for help to make your marriage strong.

2. Read Ephesians 5-6. If you are married, read it together with your spouse. Identify and list family roles and responsibilities. Prayerfully consider areas in your marriage that need to improve or change. Write your thoughts. Keep your notes as these responsibilities will be discussed in Lessons 5 and 6.

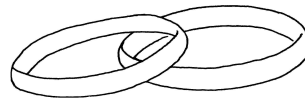
## Lesson

# 5

## GUIDELINES FOR HUSBANDS

### Objectives

- To learn that a successful marriage requires intense desire, knowledge and grace
- To understand the four primary responsibilities of a husband
- To learn how to meet the basic needs of your wife



### Key Verse

*Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. (1 Corinthians 11:3)*

### A. A successful marriage: The husband's part

God, who created all things, desires that marriage be the most satisfying relationship humans have apart from their relationship with Him. Great and satisfying marriages are no accident. They require hard work and a deep desire to have the very best relationship possible.

Many times, couples refuse to do the hard work to make their marriage relationship satisfying. As a result, they find themselves *enduring* their relationship instead of *enjoying* it. One reason has to do with how they build their relationship with one another. It is of great significance to God how a couple builds their marriage and families. Putting on, or wearing, the marriage symbol (such as a marriage ring), does not make a person a great husband or wife. Just as putting on a soccer uniform does not make that person a great athlete. For a marriage to be successful, it requires three things: **desire**, **knowledge** and **grace**.

## 1. Desire

The first requirement for a successful marriage is the intense desire to have a great and healthy marriage. Desire to have God's best in the marriage relationship gives motivation and energy:

- to make personal changes.
- to accept one's spouse unconditionally.
- to believe God for His best in the relationship.

When that kind of commitment is not present, the husband or the wife begins to compromise and settle for a relationship that is far less than all God intends. Without the desire to have what God says can be theirs in the marriage relationship, these couples live frustrated and unfulfilled lives.

## 2. Knowledge

The second requirement is to have the knowledge of how to build a successful relationship. The Bible gives specific guidelines about what God requires of the husband and wife in marriage. These guidelines show the roles and responsibilities of both the husband and the wife in the marriage. When couples know and follow these guidelines, they strengthen the integrity and stability of their relationship.

For example, can you imagine a builder of a house or a commercial building that ignores the building plans? What would happen if he decided to ignore some of the steps in the building process or did not include certain essential building materials? The house could

easily crack and tear apart over time. Couples who refuse to build their relationship according to God's "plan" find similar problems. Just like cracks will develop in the walls or the roof begins to leak, cracks will develop in the marriage relationship as well. Emotional "leaks" begin to develop. These "cracks" and "leaks" will cause great harm to the marriage relationship over time.

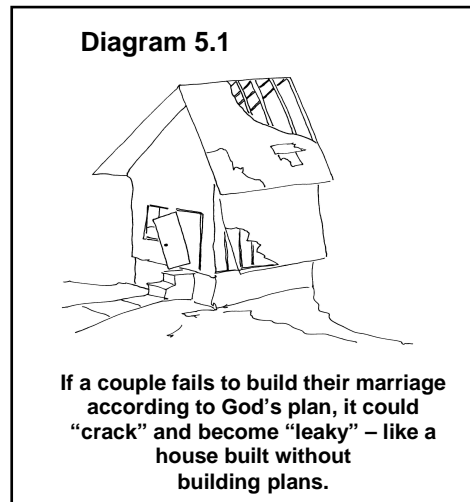
Guidelines for the husband are discussed later in this lesson. Guidelines for the wife are discussed in Lesson 6. Therefore, it is of great importance that the husband and the wife

discover and discuss these guidelines. It is equally important that they commit in their hearts to build a relationship that will last.

### 3. Grace

The third requirement for a great marriage is grace. "Grace" is defined as *"the undeserved provision of God given at salvation that enables believers to be, and do, all that God desires them to be and do."* A follower of Christ's declaration of dependence upon God is "grace." It is God's grace that enables His power to help the couple relate to one another with God's strength, and NOT their own strength. Apart from God's power and strength, the follower of Christ will never have the personal and inner resources to fulfill all that God asks of them in the marriage relationship.

**THEREFORE: When the three requirements of desire, knowledge and grace are present within the marriage, God is then able to bring peace, satisfaction and fruitfulness into the life of the husband and wife.**



When giving instructions for marriage, the Bible starts with the man, the husband, because he is called “the head” (1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23). Being the “head” means he is to be responsible, give leadership and provide protection. When the apostle Paul wrote about marriage, he revealed that there is a similarity in the relationship of a husband and wife and the relationship Christ has with His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). The Bible says believers love Christ because He first loved them (1 John 4:19). In other words, God was the initiator of love and redemption by sending His Son to die for sin. Followers of Christ respond to that act of love by embracing Christ as Savior and Lord.

One can apply that idea to the natural marriage relationship too. They discover that the husband is to be the initiator and the wife is to be the responder. If a man wants his wife to behave properly and respond positively, he needs to initiate behavior towards her that God intends. Then she will express love and honor towards her husband because he took the initiative to meet her needs.

It is God’s will that husbands and wives meet each other’s basic relational, sexual and companionship needs. When these needs are met, husbands and wives will not look other places to get their needs met. The meeting of each other’s needs guarantees less conflict in the relationship. It also puts a guard around the relationship that protects it from apathy, immorality and adultery. **It is crucial for couples to understand God’s responsibilities concerning their unique roles in marriage.** They are instructed to pursue obeying His commands in marriage trusting that the power of His Spirit will sustain them in their relationship with one another.

## **B. Guidelines for husbands**

For the man to be a successful and godly husband, he needs to follow the instructions given by God. The remainder of this lesson focuses on the responsibilities of the husband.



## Diagram 5.2 Checklist of the husband's responsibilities

<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility 1	Take responsibility for your marriage.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility 2	Love your wife by meeting her needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility 3	Understand and accept the uniqueness of your wife.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility 4	Increase your wife's value through honor and respect.

### Responsibility 1:

#### **Take responsibility for your marriage.**

*Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. (1 Corinthians 11:3)*

*For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. (Ephesians 5:23)*

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11:3 that the "man" is the "head of the woman." The word "man" specifically refers to a husband in regards to his wife. In other Scripture passages when the Bible talks of a woman submitting to a man, it says she is to submit to "... her own husband," not to just any man (Ephesians 5:22). Therefore, the husband is instructed to be the head of his own wife. **This means he is to take charge and responsibility for their marriage relationship.**

He is also responsible for what happens within the context of the home. When the husband fails to take responsibility for the family, his wife will almost always have to take charge. She will have to fight battles that were not intended to be hers to fight. She will have stress she was not intended to have. This is **not** God's plan.

The husband is intended to be the provider, protector and supporter of his wife. This position of authority is a

**The husband is intended to be the provider, protector and supporter of his wife.**

delegated responsibility. It is a responsibility the husband did not earn and does not deserve. Unfortunately, many times husbands try to force their wives to submit to their authority. They boss them around and may even become mean to them. This is **not** God's desire at all.

Authority can only be exercised effectively when the husband is under the authority of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that Christ is the head of every man (1 Corinthians 11:3). **A man cannot cover his wife spiritually and be her head unless he is under the authority of Jesus submitting himself to Christ and His will.** To say it in another way, the husband will never be able to spiritually take charge of the marriage until Jesus is able to take charge of him.

Jesus explained what it means to live under authority in the story of the Centurion.

*When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, **"I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."** (Matthew 8:5-10 emphasis added)*

The Centurion said that Jesus could command his servant to be healed because He, Jesus, was a man under authority. Jesus said this man had greater faith than any one in Israel.

Even though Jesus was the Son of God, He was still under the authority of God the Father. This was an act of voluntary submission so He could die for the sin of humanity. There was no other way for salvation to come to mankind. Christ's power came through His submission to the Father.

This concept of authority is also seen in Philippians 2:5-11 where the Apostle Paul talks about Christ's submission. Jesus was given "... *the name that is above every name ...*" (Philippians 2:9) because He submitted to the will of the Father. This concept becomes true for people as well. God's power and authority flows to husbands when they live under the submission of Christ and His will. **Therefore, the husband's first guideline that directs all others is that he must take responsibility for the relationship as the God appointed head of the relationship.**

## **Responsibility 2:**

### **Love your wife by meeting her needs.**

This section first discusses the responsibility of the husband to "love" his wife. Then, the text lists some of the needs of the wife for which the husband is responsible to meet.

#### **1. Husband's responsibility to love his wife**

Husbands are instructed "... *to love their wives, just like Christ loved the church ...*" (Ephesians 5:25). Practically speaking, this means that the husband is to discover her needs and take the initiative to meet those needs. In order to do this, he will have to die to independence and self-centeredness. Jesus loved unconditionally. He loved mankind while they were sinners. He died for mankind's sin because they needed the forgiveness of God. His death took place before anyone had accepted Him. He did not demand people's acceptance of Him before He died. He gave His life simply because He loved them. It is every person's greatest need. Jesus met that need. That is love in action.

In the same way, a husband is to love his wife by discovering what her unique needs are. He is to do everything in his power to meet those needs. Some men will say, "I do not know what my wife's needs are." **There is a quick answer to that: Simply ask her.** Most wives know what their needs are. When a husband is ignoring the needs of his wife, she will be more than willing to let him know what needs are not being met. (The basic needs of a wife are shown in Table 5.2 later in this lesson.)

Ephesians 5:25-31 describe the various kinds of love Jesus' had for mankind and the church.

- Sacrificial love (5:25)
- Unifying love (5:26)
- Cleansing (purifying) love (5:26-27)
- Personal love (5:28-30)
- Inseparable love (5:31)

Each of these kinds of love is discussed in the following text. It is the husband's responsibility to love his wife in these ways.

- **Sacrificial love**

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25)*

The Scripture says that Jesus gave His life for the church. He voluntarily gave up the splendor of heaven to come to this earth and die. In other words, He was willing to give up His rights in order to meet the deepest need of mankind. He sacrificed comfort, glory, pleasure and security to come to earth.

In the same way, many times husbands will have to sacrifice their leisure activities, their independence or their time to meet the needs of their wives. A question a man needs to answer about loving his wife is this: "What are you willing to lay down for your wife?" Jesus laid down His life for mankind. Husbands must do the same for their wives.

- **Unifying love**

*to make her holy, ... (Ephesians 5:26)*

The Bible says that Jesus loved the church and wanted *to make her holy*, to sanctify her. The word "sanctify" means "*to make something holy, to set it apart.*" It means that something is being set apart for God's purposes. The church is that group of God's people who are called out of darkness to become God's chosen possession (1 John 1:3-7). As His children (1 John 3:1), believers are sanctified, or set apart, so He can lavish His love upon them and so they can serve Him.

When a husband loves his wife this way, she feels “set apart” from all other women. She feels that she is the number one priority in her husband’s heart. This kind of love connects them in heart, vision and all the concerns of life. Jesus said that oneness with Him was the greatest testimony the world could know (John 17:20-26). In the same way, a Christian marriage becomes a testimony when it demonstrates oneness with God.

- **Cleansing (purifying) love**

*... cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:26-27)*

This Scripture says that because of Christ’s love, the church is cleansed, it is purified. Believers are literally cleansed “... by the washing with water through the word.”

In the same way, husbands are instructed to love their wives like Christ loved the church. They are to “cleanse” their wives of those things that have become bondages to them. Many times, a wife needs to be cleansed from anger, insecurity, fear, poor self-esteem and loneliness. When husbands love their wives properly, these things are “washed out” of their spirits. Their wives begin to reveal the true glory of God that dwells within them.

- **Personal love**

*In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:28-30)*

This Scripture says that husbands are to love their wives as they would their own bodies. Paul says in verse 29 that a husband will feed and care for his own body. He will not reject or treat his body badly.

In the same way, he is instructed to love his wife with the same passion that he would use to take care of himself. How can you

“feed” and “care for” your wife? Apply what has been called, “the golden rule” (Matthew 7:12). Jesus said that believers are to treat others the same way they want to be treated.

*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.  
(Matthew 7:12)*

This concept is especially true in the marriage relationship. Table 5.1 shows some of the ways a husband should treat his wife.

<b>Table 5.1 Treat your wife like you want to be treated</b>	
Do you enjoy compliments?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Then give compliments to your wife.</li> </ul>
Do you appreciate help when faced with too much work?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Then give your wife help when she is faced with too much work.</li> </ul>
Does it make you feel good when someone tells you “thank you” when you have done something to help them?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Then tell your wife “thank you,” when she does something to help you.</li> </ul>
<b>Love your wife like you want to be loved.</b>	

- **Inseparable love**

*“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” (Ephesians 5:31 and Genesis 2:24)*

In Ephesians 5:31, Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 which says that the husband and wife are to “become one flesh.” This oneness is expressed physically through sexual intimacy. But God meant much more than that. He meant for the husband and wife to lose their self-centeredness and begin living life for one another. This is the result of a godly marriage. God never desires for a relationship He establishes to be divided. The Apostle Paul says that nothing will ever be able to separate believers “... from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus their Lord” (Romans 8:39). This is the kind of love that Christ intends to exist in the marriage relationship. When husbands

love as Christ loves, that love will win the heart of their wives to such an extent that they will truly become “one” physically, emotionally and spiritually.

## 2. The basic needs of a wife

Because divorce is common in many countries, numerous studies have been done to discover why this is the case. The number one reason why marriages do not last is because basic needs are not met. These same studies have tried to define the basic needs of husbands and wives. Table 5.2 shows the basic needs of a wife that her husband needs to meet.

**The number one reason marriages do not last is because basic needs are not met.**

<b>Table 5.2 Basic needs of a wife</b>	
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Security</b></p> <p>People have said that security may be the most important need of a woman. When a wife feels secure, she is safe, guarded, protected and financially sound. To a wife, security means the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She is secure when she knows that she is the first priority of her husband.</li> <li>• She is secure when she knows that her husband will work hard at providing financially for the family.</li> <li>• She is secure when she knows that her husband will protect both she and their children from any harm.</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Affection</b></p> <p>Simply put, the wife needs consistent acts of kindness, consideration and loving physical touches. Affection is not sex. Affection is the expression of thoughtfulness through giving, serving and caring.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Conversation</b></p> <p>Studies show that women need conversation with their husbands. Men have a tendency to be quiet, they are not very verbal. In fact, a lot of conversation can be irritating to many men. Yet, when a man takes the time to share things</p>

**Table 5.2 Basic needs of a wife**

	with his wife, she feels more intimate with him. She feels that he desires her to be a part of his life.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Honesty</b> A wife needs to feel that their marriage relationship is open and honest. Sometimes men have a tendency to hide things from their wives. They do this for many reasons. However, hiding things develops distrust that many times can never be healed. When the husband is willing to stay open and honest about his personal struggles and daily activities, the wife feels secure because trust is not violated.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Family commitment</b> A great need of the wife is to know that her husband is committed to help raise the children responsibly. Many men find themselves detached from domestic, family responsibilities. As a result, the wife is left with all the discipline and parenting responsibilities. She feels abandoned. A basic need of a wife is to know that her husband will help carry the burden of caring for the family.

### **Responsibility 3**

#### **Understand and accept the uniqueness of your wife.**

*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (1 Peter 3:7)*

In 1 Peter 3:7, the Bible instructs husbands to “*be considerate.*” This can also be translated as to “... *live with their wives in an understanding way ...*” To say it in another way, husbands are to become students of their wives. They are to study them and know their strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, fears and personal passions. Husbands are to know their wife’s limitations as well.

When Peter says a man’s wife is a “*weaker partner,*” he is not saying she is inferior. He is saying that women have physical limitations in most instances when compared to men. Men are to be sensitive to a woman’s physical limitations before they ask or expect them to do hard, physical work. The woman was not created to be a



man's work animal. To disregard her uniqueness by forcing her to be someone (or something) she is not violates God's command to understand and accept her the way God made her.

God is very serious about how a husband is to treat his wife in this manner. In fact, 1 Peter 3:7 says that if he does not treat her correctly, God will not listen to this man's prayers. His prayers will be hindered. It is important for the husband to understand and accept the uniqueness of his wife because men often react by attempting to control their wife instead of accepting her. **When a husband discovers how God made the woman unique, he learns her deepest needs and struggles. He is then better able to serve his wife more effectively.** He will not always be trying to change her.

#### **Responsibility 4:**

**Increase your wife's value through honor and respect.**

*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (1 Peter 3:7)*

This Scripture passage also instructs a husband to "treat them with respect." This can also be translated as "showing [granting] honor." The word "grant" means "to assign, portion off, or section off." It means that the husband is to protect his wife's honor and publicly communicate honor to her.

The following example may help to explain this concept. When someone puts a fence around a piece of land, they are doing several things. They are identifying publicly that this land is owned. They set it apart from all the other land that surrounds it. They are also protecting the land from unlawful or unwanted intruders. To grant honor to one's wife means that the husband publicly communicates to others that his wife has great value and worth.

**To grant honor to one's wife means that the husband publicly communicates to others that his wife has great value and worth.**

Just like the fence protects the land, the husband is to guard and protect the honor of his wife at all times. What is honor? The word “honor” means “to value or consider precious.” When a husband gives his wife honor and respect, she will not only become more valuable to him, but her value of herself will increase as well. Many times people do not treasure things because they do not invest in them. Jesus shared this principle with His disciples in Matthew’s gospel.

*“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”  
(Matthew 6:21)*

This means that where one invests time or money in a person or thing, they will start to treasure that thing. It is true of anything in life. If one gives all their time and energy to fixing up a home, they will treasure that home. Some men spend all their time participating in sporting activities. They begin to treasure them because they give all their time to them. When a man starts investing his time, attention, energy and help into his wife, over time he will grow to treasure her.

*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (1 Peter 3:7)*

God also says wives are valuable because they are “heirs with you of the gracious gift of life.” She has a spiritual inheritance and calling. She has been given spiritual gifts and has spiritual assignments from Christ Himself. Therefore, the husband needs to discover their wife’s God-given talents and gifts. He is instructed to serve his wife. Husbands should never treat their wives disrespectfully. The wife should be treated with dignity and honor. The husband should never be threatened by the gifts, talents and callings their wife possesses. By giving their wives honor, Christ is honored!

## **SUMMARY**

As one can see, accepting the responsibility to be the head of his wife and home is a great honor and privilege for the husband.

Through the grace of the Lord Jesus who lives in them, their marriage can be successful, fruitful and fulfilling.

## ♥ Discussion Points/Questions

1. Consider these three requirements for a successful marriage:
  - ✓ Desire to have a great and healthy marriage.
  - ✓ To have knowledge in how to build a successful marriage.
  - ✓ God's grace is necessary in a successful marriage.
  - Discuss why husbands and wives sometimes struggle with these requirements.
  - Discuss ways they may need to change themselves to be successful in meeting these requirements.
  
2. Read 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23 in class. This question was previously discussed in Lesson 3. After studying this lesson, discuss the following questions again.
  - What does it mean for a husband to be the head of his wife and family?
  - How can a husband love his wife like Christ loved the church? Look up the Scriptures relating to the following kinds of love Christ had for the church and discuss.
    - Sacrificial love (5:25)
    - Unifying love (5:26)
    - Cleansing (purifying) love (5:26-27)
    - Personal love (5:28-30)
    - Inseparable love (5:31)
  - Has your opinion changed now that you have studied this concept further?

3. Review the basic needs of a wife shown in Table 5.2.
  - Discuss which basic need is hardest for husbands to consistently meet?
  - Why is it important for the husband to meet these needs?
4. Discuss some practical ways a husband can show honor and respect to his wife?

 **Application**

1. Prayerfully consider the following basic needs of a wife. Write your thoughts on those with which you struggle. Write how you could better resolve that need.

Basic needs of a wife	How you can better meet the needs of your wife
1. Security	
2. Affection	
3. Conversation	
4. Honesty	
5. Family commitment	

2. In which one area do you feel you are doing great as a husband? Which area do you need to improve the most? Write your thoughts. Discuss these two questions with your spouse.

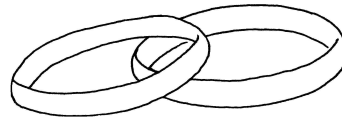
## Lesson

# 6

## GUIDELINES FOR WIVES

### Objectives

- To understand the basic responsibilities of a wife
- To learn the needs of the husband
- To discover the meaning of honor, respect and submission



### Key Verse

*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*  
(Ephesians 5:33)

### A. Successful marriage: the wife's part

A successful and fulfilling marriage takes both the husband's and the wife's participation. They are both responsible to discover and obey God's instructions concerning their relationship. Lesson 5, Guidelines for Husbands, taught that a successful marriage requires desire, knowledge and grace. It also discussed four specific responsibilities of the husband. The focus of this lesson is to give

wives an understanding of how they can help create godly, successful marriages by following God's instructions.

Just as the husband has responsibilities, the wife also has specific responsibilities in the marriage relationship. The responsibilities of the wife include those shown in Diagram 6.1.

**Diagram 6.1 Checklist of the wife's responsibilities**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility 1	Commit to meet your husband's needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility 2	Honor your husband's divine calling as head of the home.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility 3	Follow your husband's leadership.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility 4	Demonstrate admiration and respect to your husband.

**Responsibility 1:**

**Commit to meet your husband's needs.**

*Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. (Titus 2:3-5)*

When the Apostle Paul wrote this Scripture, it was a difficult command for a woman to obey. In culture of this time, the Jews had a very low view of women. In the pagan Greek world, wives were merely workers. They cleaned the house, had children and cooked meals. At that time, their husbands found most of their sexual fulfillment outside of their marriages. Unfortunately, these attitudes towards women still exist in many parts of the world today.

Paul told wives to love their husbands and to train younger women to love their husbands too. However, because of the prevailing attitude toward women, sometimes this was a hard command for

them to obey. On a practical level, this Scripture means that a wife is to do all she can to meet her husband's needs.

## **1. Needs of a husband**

Scholars have tried to determine the core needs of a man in regards to his wife. Through that insight, as well as the wisdom given in the Bible, the majority of husbands have the following needs.

- The husband needs a wife who helps around the home.
- The husband needs sexual fulfillment from his wife.
- The husband needs a wife who cares about her appearance.

Each of these needs of the husband will be discussed briefly in the following text.

### **a. A husband needs a wife who helps around the home.**

As seen in the previously quoted Scripture, Paul told Titus to tell the wives that they are to be *"busy at home"* (Titus 2:5). Men need their wives to be responsible to care for the home. Men need their wives to prepare the meals and take care of the children while they are out working.

In some cultures, many women have jobs outside the home just like their husbands. If that is the case, the husband needs to share the responsibilities to care for the home. It is God's best, however, if the wife can function as the mother to their children by being at home especially during their early years. To have his wife at home helping the children, washing the clothes and caring for the home takes a tremendous amount of stress off of the husband. If he comes home after working hard all day and finds the home messy and basic chores undone, it creates tremendous frustration in the husband.

This does not mean the husband is excused from helping in the home. A man's wife is not intended to be his workhorse. When he is home, the husband should help with the children. He should also help with any other tasks that need his attention.

In summary, when a man's wife strives to keep their home in order, it meets a deep need in the man. This allows their home to be a place of peace, rest and renewal.

**b. A husband needs sexual fulfillment from his wife.**

One of the most basic needs of a man is his need for sexual fulfillment. Many times, a wife does not understand this God-given need in a man's life. Of all the needs a man has, he can get all of them met legitimately in some other way except this one. The husband has made a commitment (a vow) before God to let his wife be the only one in the world to satisfy this need in his life. This puts tremendous responsibility on the shoulders of the wife to be sensitive to her husband in this area. Paul addressed this issue with the Christians in Corinth.

*The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)*

In this Scripture passage, Paul is talking about the sexual responsibilities of the married couple toward one another. It seems likely that some of these couples were depriving each other of sexual intimacy. This was causing great problems in their relationship. They were being tempted to go outside of their marriage for sexual satisfaction. Of course, that is sin. Therefore, Paul says that a man and wife should remember that their bodies are given to each other for this express purpose. They should not hold themselves back from the other unless they agree to do so for a specific time so they might seek the Lord in prayer and fasting.

There are times, however, when a husband needs to be sensitive to his wife in regards to sexual intimacy. Many times after childbirth, a woman is in great pain and needs time to heal. Also, when women are having their menstrual period and feel unclean, husbands need



to be sensitive about forcing their wives to have sex. Loving your wife means waiting until she feels proper about having sex.

Women need to be careful that they do not use sex as a way to control or manipulate their husbands. They are not to withhold sexual intimacy to get revenge or to punish their husbands because of something they did or did not do. The wife is to be the only “*sexual fountain*” from which her husband can drink. (📖 Read Proverbs 5:15-21 for a better understanding of this concept.)

In summary, wives need to respond to their husbands with great sensitivity in regards to this issue.

**c. A husband needs a wife who cares about her appearance.**

This is a sensitive issue for many women. Men are normally far more visually oriented than women. Husbands want to be proud of their wives. Many wives take no care or concern in how they appear. As a result, husbands may look at other women in unhealthy and ungodly ways.

There are some things a woman cannot help in her appearance. Men need to understand this. True love will always love regardless of physical appearance. There are things, however, that many women can change or improve if they so desire. When a woman cares about her appearance for the sake of her husband, it develops appreciation in his heart for his wife. For men, beauty begins outwardly (physically) and moves inwardly as they develop a deep love for their wives.

A wife should occasionally ask her husband if there is something in her appearance that he would like to see change. The wife should desire to look her best for her husband. Attractiveness is both outward and inward. Focusing on the outward appearance without giving attention to the inner person will not have a lasting impression on the husband. Peter addresses this in his first letter.

*Your beauty should not come from outward adornment,  
such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and  
fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self,*

*the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (1 Peter 3:3-4)*

In this Scripture, Peter says a woman should not spend her time **only** on the outward appearance to the exclusion of her "inner self." He said a woman creates an attraction in the heart of her husband towards her if she spends time nurturing her character. **It is a woman's character that will ultimately draw a man to his wife.**

Most men do not want their wife to be critical, negative, loud, undisciplined and bossy. Instead, the wife should be controlled in her speech and expressing an attitude of gratefulness. She is to be gentle in her approach to her children and patient with her husband at all times.

## **Responsibility 2:**

**Honor your husband's divine calling as head of the home.**

*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. (Ephesians 5:22-23)*

A wife is instructed to acknowledge that her husband has been called by God to be the head of the home. She should do all that she can to honor that calling. His actions may not always deserve respect, but his position demands it. Another Scripture passage relating to this principle follows.

*Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. (1 Peter 2:18)*

In this Scripture, Peter was specifically talking to household slaves and servants, not to the wife. He stated that showing respect and honor, even to an unreasonable master, can reveal God's character and love. Light shows brightest when it is shining in the midst of darkness (John 1:5). This principle holds true for the marriage as well. A wife that learns to show respect to her husband – even when

he is acting unkind or unreasonable – will release God to draw that man to Himself.

The following diagram shows several questions a wife might ask herself regarding how she treats her husband.

**Diagram 6.2 Questions a wife should ask herself**

- Do I criticize, assault or embarrass my husband in front of other people or my children?
- Do I guard my husband's reputation before others? Or, do I tear it down?
- Do I undermine my husband's authority in our home? When he makes a decision regarding the home or children, do I support him? Or, do I go against his authority?
- Am I constantly critical and negative about how my husband conducts himself?
- Do I see my husband's weaknesses as a point for prayer or a point of attack?

*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)*

- For a woman to feel secure in the marriage relationship, **she must know that her husband loves her.**
- Likewise, for a husband to feel secure with his wife, **he must feel he is respected.**

**Responsibility 3:**

**Follow your husband's leadership.**

*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the*

*church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22-24)*

### **a. Submission**

This responsibility has to do with the command for a wife to submit to her husband. When many women hear the word “submit,” all kinds of negative thoughts come into their heads. They begin to think:

- ... To submit is to be a slave.
- ... To submit is to lose my individuality.
- ... To submit is to admit my inferiority.

“Submission” simply means to yield to another’s authority. It carries the idea of giving up your rights or self-assertiveness in order to follow another. It is not implying blind obedience. It is, however, following the functional authority that God intended for the family. It is important for the wife to submit to her husband for two reasons.

- First, the wife shows reverence to the Lord Himself by submitting to her husband. Ephesians 5:22 says that a woman is to submit to her own husband “*as to the Lord.*”
- Second, submission is God’s way of protecting the wife.

Submission has nothing to do with a woman’s personal value or significance. A woman is equal with her husband in her intellectual abilities, in her spirituality and in her creativity. Yet, in everyday practical living, a wife is to submit herself to her husband’s God-given authority to lead. It is a matter of practicality and order.

**“Submission” is a matter of practicality and order.**

Within life itself, there is the need for functional authority. That is why governments, businesses, schools, the military, sports teams and other social groups have a defined structure of authority. This authority is carried out by officers, managers and leaders. When wives refuse to follow the leadership and headship of their husbands, many problems can potentially arise.

## b. Struggle to submit

The struggle many women have in submitting to their husbands goes back to the Garden of Eden. This struggle is a part of God's judgment on Adam and Eve after they sinned. (📖 See Genesis 1-3 for the story of Adam and Eve.) The story reveals the violation of God's order of authority. This couple was given the authority by God to have dominion over the earth. They were told to subdue it and rule over every living thing.

*God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28)*

The authority of Adam and Eve to rule was directly tied to their submission to the will of God. When they chose to rebel and assert their own authority, God came to uncover their sin and to pronounce judgment upon them (Genesis 3:14-21). In receiving this rebuke and judgment from God, one finds that through sin the natural order of God is challenged.

***To the woman he said,** "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." **To Adam he said,** "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; ..." (Genesis 3:16-17 emphasis added)*

According to Genesis 3:16, the husband is "to rule" over his wife. The word for "rule" in this verse is a word that literally means "to govern, to rule over, to have dominion, to manage." Simply put, the man is to be the leader in the home. However, many men today still struggle to take charge. They struggle in their responsibility to be leaders in the home. Many times, they struggle in making decisions. Instead of acting responsibly, they have to be prodded or nagged to fulfill their God-given obligations. Once again, this is a direct result of the power of sin operating in their flesh.

This verse also says that the woman's "*desire will be for your husband.*" The word "*desire*" is an interesting word. It is only used three times in the Old Testament. Two of the three occurrences are in chapters 3 and 4 of Genesis. It is a word that comes from another Hebrew noun meaning "*to run after, or to run over.*" It carries the idea of conquering something, to capture and control it because of a craving desire to have it. For example, a lion may run after a smaller animal because it has a craving desire to have it for dinner. That is the image of this word. The image is that of an animal in striking position ready to pounce upon its prey.

Eve's problem was that she acted independent of Adam when being confronted by Satan (Genesis 3:1-7). As a result of not involving her husband with the choice given her, she submitted to the temptation.

God was angry with Adam because he submitted to his wife instead of submitting to the will of God. Adam was passive when the serpent was having this discussion with Eve. The Bible says that Adam was with her when this event took place (Genesis 3:17). Adam was complacent in his leadership and passive to intervene.

When Adam submitted to his wife and entered into sin with her, he opened the door for sin to operate its curse in his life. Not only would he have to struggle against nature to provide food for himself and his family, but he would also struggle in fulfilling his responsibility to give leadership in the home.

Hidden in this passage is the revelation of how the curse of sin challenges the order of God for both the husband and wife.

- For the man, the order of God is to exercise righteous authority and leadership. But the curse of sin encourages irresponsible leadership. Men will forever struggle with responsible leadership.
- For the woman, the order of God is to submit to her husband's leadership. But the curse of sin encourages a desire to control. Women will forever struggle with a controlling spirit.

God wants both husbands and wives to be aware of these tendencies and to know that His order is possible by means of the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of Christ and the indwelling power

of His Spirit, both men and women can fulfill God's design through the power of His strength operating in them.

### c. **Mutual submission**

It is important to give balance to this teaching on submission. The following verse is the starting place for all the instructions Paul gives on marriage.

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.  
(Ephesians 5:21)*

The significance of this verse cannot be overstated; it is the foundational meaning behind Paul's instructions for the marriage relationship. First, Paul says that there is to be a mutual submission that takes place between the two of them (Ephesians 5:21). Then in Ephesians 5:22-24, Paul says that the husband is the head and the wife is to submit to his leadership.

The husband is to listen to his wife as God uses her to speak truth and balance into their home and lives. Sometimes a wife will give her husband God's wisdom. When he listens to her wisdom, he is actually practicing a form of mutual submission. He is still held responsible before God for the decisions made, but he comes under her counsel when he knows it is right and proper.

When both spouses understand the power of submission, headship, authority and covering, their relationship will be improved in wonderful and incredible ways. These character qualities in a marriage will always bless and never curse their relationship.

**When both spouses understand the power of submission, headship, authority and covering, their relationship will be improved in wonderful and incredible ways.**

#### **Responsibility 4:**

#### **Demonstrate admiration and respect to your husband.**

*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)*

The word “*respect*” used in this verse is a word also used in the following contexts:

- Children are to respect their parents. (Leviticus 19:3)
- Subjects are to respect (or revere) their rulers. (Joshua 4:14)
- Servants are to honor and respect their masters. (1 Peter 2:18)

When a wife respects her husband, she is not just acknowledging his position. She is also showing respect to him in that position. The opposite of respect is “criticism.” Criticism creates resentment and resistance. When a wife criticizes her husband, she communicates disapproval. Men have a basic need for approval and respect. Another word relating to respect is “admiration.” A woman’s admiration of (or respect for) her husband will create motivation for him to change. He will want to be all he is instructed to be for her and the family.

### **SUMMARY**

- ✓ Both the husband and the wife have some very challenging responsibilities to each other before God.
- ✓ When basic needs are met, blessing and fulfillment follow.

More than anything else, God intends for the marriage relationship to be enjoyed and not simply endured. He wants the husband and the wife to express their love towards one another in such a way that they can say with all honesty that this is the same kind of love Christ has for His bride, the church.



## ♥ Discussion Points/Questions

1. Discuss how women are valued in your culture.
  - Read Titus 2:3-5. Discuss why older women are instructed to teach younger women. How is this helpful both to the older woman and to the younger woman?
  - How do the roles of older women and younger women compare with what you have learned in this lesson?
2. Why is it important for the wife to support the position of the husband as head of the home?
  - Review Diagram 6.2, Questions a wife should ask herself.
  - Discuss the fact that the answers to each of these questions reflect how the wife “honors” her husband as the head of the home. Why is this so?
3. Responsibility 3 is instructing the wife to follow her husband’s leadership. Read Ephesians 5:21-24.
  - Discuss what it means for the wife to “submit” to her husband’s leadership.
  - Why does a marriage relationship need only one leader?
  - Why will a relationship NOT be peaceful if more than one person tries to be the leader?
  - What does it practically mean for a wife to submit to her own husband?
  - To whom is the husband instructed to submit? How does the headship of Christ over the church relate to the marriage relationship?
  - Discuss the command to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21). How will the marriage be strengthened if the husband and wife do this?

4. The fourth responsibility of the wife is to demonstrate her admiration and respect for her husband.
  - Discuss why it is important that a wife “demonstrate” her respect for her husband?
  - How does this relate to a successful marriage relationship?
  - How does a man react when he “feels” respected?
  - In what ways can a wife be sure to show respect and admiration to her own husband?

### **Application**

1. Prayerfully consider the basic needs of a husband. With which of these needs do you struggle in your marriage relationship? Write how you could better resolve that need. If you are married, do this activity with your spouse.
2. Read Ephesians 5-6 with your spouse. Prayerfully consider the command to “submit” as it relates to all walks of life. What areas outside of the home do you find the necessity to submit? For example, government, business, school, community, police and military are some areas that require submission. What about the laws of your city and country? Discuss your attitude toward submission.

# Lesson

# 7

## RAISING HEALTHY CHILDREN GOD'S WAY

### Objectives

- To understand that the most important responsibility of a parent is to teach their children about Christ
- To understand the importance of parenting
- To know that being a parent is rewarding but it is also very hard work

### Key Verse

*... we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. ... so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.  
(Psalm 78:4, 6-7)*

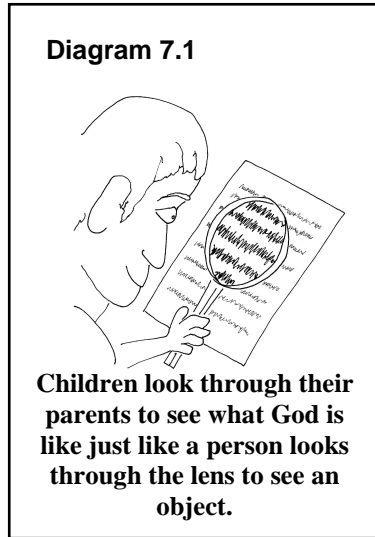
### A. Represent Christ to children

More than anything else, parents are commissioned to represent Christ to their children. First and foremost, parents are to be

followers of Christ. They are ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). As parents look at fulfilling their parental responsibilities to their children, they must do this in light of representing Christ in their home. This task of representing Christ involves several important responsibilities.

### **1. Parents become the lens which determines how their children see God.**

A lens or a pair of glasses enables a person to see an object clearly.



This is what parents become to their children. Children look through their parents to see what God is like just like a person looks through the lens or a pair of glasses to see an object. If that lens is distorted or scratched, it will distort the object they are trying to see. This is why many children grow up to be adults who have difficulty trusting in God. Many times, it starts in a childhood where their parents lived ungodly and inconsistent lives. It is a great honor to be a living representative of Christ to one's child.

A child cannot see God or fully understand Him on their own. God gave parents to represent Himself to their children. If the character of a father and mother is distorted, then the character of God becomes distorted to the children. If parents cannot be trusted to keep their word, then their children will have difficulty trusting the Word of God. If parents are not forgiving and are full of criticism, then their children will see God as unforgiving and full of judgment. On the other hand, **if parents are available, loving and forgiving, their children will see God in these ways as well.**

## 2. Parents become the building plans which determine how their children will build their lives.

When a builder starts to build a house, he needs to have a set of drawings (or building plans) that give him direction and guidance in how to build the building correctly. Children are in the process of building their lives. Their “building plans” are the actions and behaviors of their parents. As the parents relate, instruct and communicate with their children, they are actually modeling to their children how to live and build their lives. Psalm 78 tells how important it is for parents to give their children a Biblical and spiritual understanding of life.

Diagram 7.2

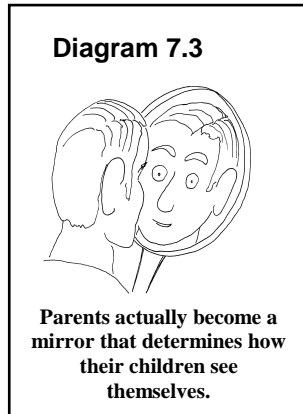


**A child’s “building plans” are the actions and behaviors of their parents.**

*O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old—what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers—a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him. (Psalm 78:1-8)*

According to this Psalm, **the purpose of teaching one’s children is so they will put their trust, hope and confidence in God.** As ambassador’s of Christ, parents model faith and trust in God by how they live before their children.

### 3. Parents become a mirror that determines how their children see themselves.



The purpose of a mirror is to reflect back an exact image of the person looking into that mirror. It reveals to the person what they look like. This is true also for how it relates to children and their parents. Children learn about themselves by the way their parents relate to them. How children view themselves is directly tied to how they are treated by their parents. Therefore, parents actually become a mirror that determines how their children see themselves. If parents constantly point out their children's faults and mistakes,

the children will see themselves as failures and incapable of success. If parents speak harshly to them and do not treat them with love and respect, the children will see themselves as worthless and unlovable. However, if parents lovingly train their children in a godly way, they will mature into spiritually healthy adults. Depending on how the parents treat their children, the children will either see themselves as loved unconditionally, cherished, important, significant and wanted – or they will see themselves as insignificant, rejected, unloved and unimportant. It all depends on how a father and mother relate to their children over time.

Parents must accept the great responsibility of representing Christ to their children. To summarize what we have learned:

- Parents become the lens that determines how their children see God.



- Parents become the building plans that determine how their children will build their lives.



- Parents become a mirror that determines how their children see themselves.

These responsibilities are actually a blessing. When fathers and mothers accept the challenge of raising healthy and godly children, joy will come as they see their children grow up to serve Christ. It is challenging, demanding, time consuming and many times exhausting. The promise of God, however, is that a person will reap what they sow (Galatians 6:8). When a parent loves, nurtures and protects their children, the foundations of their lives will be established. They will be grounded in truth and love. Their lives will be fruitful and their children will inherit the blessing as well.

## **B. Parenting today**

Parenting in today's world is not easy. In fact, it is one of the greatest challenges one can face. With the breakdown of the family in many nations, parents are having a difficult time. This breakdown of the family includes poor role models, financial stress and the lack of emotional strength.

Every Christian parent desires to raise healthy and godly children. A person cannot dream into existence a beautiful and fruitful garden, it takes hard work. Likewise, raising responsible, godly, happy children does not happen without planning, discipline and hard work. There are several critical things that must be take place in order to produce these kinds of children. Two of these include a proper environment and the responsibility to prepare the soil of the children's hearts.

**Raising responsible,  
godly, happy children  
does not happen without  
planning, discipline and  
hard work.**

### **1. Proper environment**

In nature, the environment in which a thing lives is very influential. The environment dramatically affects the growth of that thing. For example, if a person lives in an area where the water is bad, their health will be affected because of it. In many places, people do not get enough salt or essential vitamins in their diet because the foods they eat do not have these nutrients. As a result, they develop diseases, tumors and regional illnesses. All of these problems have to do with environment. A plant will not grow in a healthy and fruitful way if its environment is bad. A business will not prosper if

employees work in an environment that is harsh, unfair and unethical.

This principle is true of the family as well. If parents develop a proper environment in which their children live and grow, they will become healthy, productive and stable individuals. If not, children will develop fears and emotional problems. They will live frustrated, unstable lives.

The Bible records a story told by Jesus called the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20). (A parable is often referred to as a heavenly story with an earthly meaning.) This story was about a man who sowed seed in a place which had different types of soil. Jesus revealed that the condition of the soil determined whether the seed could bear lasting fruit.

- If the soil was hard, the seed would not grow. (Mark 4:15)
- If the soil was rocky, the seed will not grow properly. (Mark 4:16-17)
- If there were weeds (thorns), the seed would eventually be choked of its life. (Mark 4:18-19)
- However, if the soil was moist and rich and did not have weeds or rocks, it was good soil. Good soil will allow the seed to grow and produce fruit. (Mark 4:20)

When Jesus explained this story, He wanted to identify the different environments of people's hearts. He said the "seed" sown represented the Word of God. The soil represented the heart of each person. When the environment of the heart is healthy and good, the Word of God is able to prosper.

**When the environment of the heart is healthy and good, the Word of God is able to prosper.**

## **2. Prepare the soil of children's hearts**

In the same way, parents need to prepare the hearts of their children to bear God's fruit in their lives. Parents determine the environment in which their children live. Their hearts are like a field that can produce godly, balanced, healthy fruit.



Parents want the hearts of their children to be open to them. They want to win their children's hearts so they can influence their lives when it comes to transmitting values and imparting truth. They **do not** want their children to be resentful, rebellious or hardened.

By looking at the Old Testament instructions God gave to Moses, parents can learn how to prepare their children's hearts to receive from them.

*These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to **teach** you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **Impress them on your children.** Talk about them when you **sit at home** and when you **walk along the road**, when you **lie down** and when you **get up**. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*  
(Deuteronomy 6:1-9 emphasis added)

When looking at the context of this Scripture, one finds that Moses was writing God's instructions to teach to the Israelite children. This was done at a time when the people of God were preparing to enter a land that was filled with idolatrous and pagan people. Israel had been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years because they disobeyed God. They had refused to have faith to enter the land of Canaan after they had been delivered from Egyptian bondage (Numbers 14). This time in the wilderness was God's judgment upon the generation who acted in rebellion. Now, 40 years later, Moses gives important information to the parents about how to teach to their children. The Lord knew they would be entering into

enemy territory. They would be surrounded by paganism and a culture that was contrary to righteous and truthful living. The Lord also knew that if His people were to remain loyal and faithful to Him, the parents would need to give their children a godly heritage. According to Moses, the following things will prepare the soil of their children's hearts so godly and healthy fruit can grow. These include:

- Clear guidance
- Consistency
- Demonstrated example
- Unconditional love

Each of these areas will be discussed in the following text.

#### **a. Clear guidance**

Notice that Deuteronomy 6:1-9 (as previously shown) clearly says that the parents are to teach these instructions to their children. All children need direction. They need to know what is right and what is wrong. Children resent it when they do not have boundaries or clear direction. That is why clear guidance is essential.

*The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. (Proverbs 29:15)*

When a child is left to himself or herself, they will adopt the values and behaviors of those around them. They need instruction and discipline from their parents. Parents are the primary teachers appointed by God to give their children instructions on how to live. They are also commissioned by God to teach their children a Christian and Biblical understanding of life.

In many countries, parents allow the government to educate their children. If this happens, parents must be careful to monitor what their children are being taught. They must make sure that the children are not being conformed into a world system that is not of Christ.

Parents are commanded by God to make sure their children learn the truth about life as God has defined it. Otherwise, these children will be led into teachings and beliefs that are not of God. Once a

person embraces a wrong belief concerning God and life in general, it is very hard to change their mind as they grow older.

## **b. Consistency**

*Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:7)*

Children are greatly affected by the consistency they see in their parents. As seen in this Scripture, Moses told the parents to “*impress them on your children.*” This can also be translated as “*you shall teach them diligently to your children*” The word “*diligently*” comes from a Hebrew verb meaning “*to sharpen.*” Do you know how to sharpen a knife or blade? The blade is pushed against a stone or file. One cannot sharpen the blade by running it across the stone once. It is when the blade is run over and over again on the surface of the stone that a sharp edge is produced. This is the same with children. Parents are told to be “diligent,” to put all of their energy into raising their children.

Parents should be as fair and consistent as possible. For example, do not discipline one time and not another. Do not demand something of one child and not of the other. The hearts of children will be open when their parents are consistent.

Notice this verse says that God's commandments are to be carried out:

... *when you sit at home.*  
... *when you walk along the road.*  
... *when you lie down.*  
... *when you get up.*

In other words, parents were instructed to teach and model God's way of life all the time. It is consistency that will make the difference. **Children become more consistent in their understanding of God and in their character as the parents are diligent in their teaching and living.**

**c. Demonstrated example**

*These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. (Deuteronomy 6:1-3)*

Moses reveals in these verses that the parents are commanded to live what they teach. The admonition is to be doers of God's Word

**The admonition is to be doers of God's Word before attempting to be teachers of His Word.**

before attempting to be teachers of His Word. (📖 See also Luke 6:47-49, John 13:17, James 1:22 and 1 John 2:17.)

When one looks at this Scripture passage, they discover the context that the parents were to live out the Word of God. It says the parents are to know God's Word and obey His commands "in the land." For these people, "the land" was the promised place to which God was leading them. It was "the land" where giants, enemies and adversaries of God lived. It meant living out God's Word and truth in front of their neighbors, the merchants in the market place and the people they met on the road. Living out their faith would have to be done in a culture that did not believe in the one and true living God.

These pagan Canaanite cultures were idolatrous and immoral. Because of this, extreme pressure would come to these godly

**Parents teach by their example – whether it is a good example or a bad one.**

families to conform to the values of the land. Moses instructed parents to model for their children godly values and godly living in the land where they

lived.

The land in which we live is also spiritually hostile. Values, attitudes and behaviors are all things that are impressed upon our children. Children observe not only how their parents live. They also observe how the people in the world around them live. Therefore, when parents live consistent and godly lives, it impresses godly values, attitudes and behaviors upon their children. Children are not manipulated by the popular culture nearly as much when they see their parents living out what they say they believe. Parents teach by their example – whether it is a good example or a bad one. There are times when one may hear a small child at the market using very bad language. Where did they learn that language? They learned it from the example given to them by their parents at home. **Parents have the incredible privilege of molding godly values into the hearts of their children simply by living consistent lives.**

#### **d. Unconditional love**

*Love the LORD your God with **all your heart** and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5 emphasis added)*

In this verse, Moses instructs parents to love God with all their hearts. That unconditional love is to be expressed in human relationships as well.

Jesus talked about this command in the New Testament. When He was asked what commandment was the greatest, He affirmed this command to love God with all your heart. Jesus attached to this command the command to love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). Jesus refers to both of these commands as one law in Matthew 22:36-40.

*“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40)*

Based on this Scripture, parents are instructed to love their children and communicate acceptance to them at all times – unconditionally.

**Parents are instructed to love their children and communicate acceptance to them at all times – unconditionally.**

Children are the first place this unconditional love is to reveal itself. The command to “*love your neighbor as yourself*” must be practiced in the home as well as other relationships outside the home. Parents should practice this kind of love towards their children. When this happens,

the hearts of the children will always be open. Then the parents will be able to plant Godly “seed” in the hearts of their children.

Most parents do not intend to hurt their children, but many times they wound them without realizing it. If these wounds are not corrected, they can be carried into adulthood and affect future generations.

How do parents wound their children? What can parents do to help heal their children’s hearts when they do get hurt? The following text discusses:

- Ways parents can provoke their children
- Ways parents can help heal the hearts of their children

### 1) Ways parents can **PROVOKE** their children

*Fathers, **do not exasperate [provoke] your children;** instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4 emphasis added)*

In the verse, “*exasperate your children*” can also be translated as “*provoke your children to anger.*” The word “*provoke*” means “*to irritate or stir up feelings of anger or frustration.*” In this verse, Paul was instructing fathers (parents) not to provoke – or exasperate – their children to the point of anger. Rather, parents were instructed to give godly training and instruction to their children. If a parent is not careful, they can quite easily provoke their child. Some ways children can be provoked are shown in Table 7.1.

**Table 7.1 Ways a child can be PROVOKED**

- **Public humiliation** – Do not yell at your children or discipline them in front of others.
- **Favoritism** – Do not show more love and attention to one child over another.
- **Cruel words** – Do not curse at children or use mean and cruel words.
- **Broken promises** – Do not tell the children you will do something only to disappoint them by not doing that thing.
- **Neglect** – Spend consistent time playing and communicating with your children. Provide for their basic physical needs such as food and clothing.
- **Unfair or harsh punishment** – Discipline your children fairly.
- **Performance based acceptance** – Do not give your children love and affection ONLY when they have lived up to your standard of performance. Love them unconditionally.
- **Refusal to admit wrong** – When the parent is wrong in something they say or do, show humility by admitting that wrong to your children

## 2) Ways parents can HELP HEAL the hearts of their children

Most parents would have to admit that at one time or another they make mistakes while raising their children. They do things they regret. The good news about being followers of Christ is that His love can cover a multitude of a parent's sins (1 Peter 4:8). To do nothing deepens the wound. But when a parent takes steps to let Christ heal their children's hearts, His grace will always redeem.

**Table 7.2 Ways to HELP HEAL a child's heart**

- **Be honest** – Always admit your mistakes. Do not make excuses for your wrong behavior.
- **Be humble** – Be willing to ask the child's forgiveness when you are wrong.
- **Be tender** – Speak softly and gently. Touch your children in a loving way.

*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)*

- **Be consistent** – If harmful behavior continues on the part of the parent(s), children will never trust them. They will hold resentment in their hearts. Consistent, loving, godly behavior is the key to healing the hearts of children who are wounded. It is only when a parent's behavior changes consistently that trust can be rebuilt in the heart of a child. Therefore, it is the job of the parent to change damaging behavior.
- **Be Christ-centered** – When parents have made a huge mistake that has wounded the heart of a child, it is very helpful to pray a prayer of repentance in front of the child. A prayer like this opens the heart of the child to his or her parent.

*Dear Lord Jesus,*

*I have acted very wrong with my son (daughter). Will you forgive me for what I have done? Please heal the heart of my child and let them know my love for them. Change my heart so I will never act this way again. Thank you for your forgiveness. Heal our hearts, Lord, so we may honor you. Amen*

## SUMMARY

- ✓ As one can see, it takes a lot of effort to raise children correctly.
- ✓ It is important that parents recognize they can wound their children through incorrect parenting.
- ✓ They can also help heal children so they can mature into good parents themselves.



- ✓ Their hearts are very impressionable and vulnerable.
- ✓ This teaching has revealed how a parent can prepare their hearts so fruitful lives can result.

The family has always been God's idea. It is intended to be the foundation upon which civilization is built. Marriage becomes the cornerstone of the family. Children become the promise and hope of God's heritage continuing from generation to generation. When families are built with God's wisdom and grace, blessing will exist without measure in the nations where these families live.

Therefore, be committed to building Christian families and learn to enjoy the presence of Christ in your home. Where His presence is welcomed, you will discover God's peace, love and joy.

## ♥ Discussion Points/Questions

1. Read the following Bible verses about being a "doer" of God's Word before being able to be a "teacher" of His Word to children.
  - Luke 6:47-49
  - John 13:17
  - James 1:22
  - 1 John 2:17
  - What do these verses instruct the believer to do?
  - How does this relate to being a good parent?
2. Read the following Bible verses in class. Discuss each of the following instructions on how to prepare the "soil" of a child's heart.
  - Clear guidance (Proverbs 29:15) – Why is it important to provide guidance to a child?
  - Consistency (Deuteronomy 6:7) – Discuss the four instances of when these commands were to be carried out.
  - Demonstrated example (Deuteronomy 6:1-3) – Why is it important to lead by example?
  - Unconditional love (Deuteronomy 6:5) – Discuss the meaning of unconditional love. Why are parents instructed

- to love “with all their heart?”
- Ask your class with which of these instructions do they struggle most. Discuss in class.
3. Review Table 7.1 “Ways a child can be provoked” and Table 7.2 “Ways to help heal your child’s heart.”
- Can you remember something your parents did that wounded your heart when you were a child? If so, share with the class and discuss how this could have been prevented – and how it could have been healed.
  - Discuss the concept of “exasperating [provoking] your children to anger?”
  - What does this mean? How can it be prevented?
  - Of the five things a parent needs to practice in healing their children’s hearts, which do you do well and with which do you need help?

## Application

1. Read the following Bible verses. If you are married, do this activity with your spouse.
  - Deuteronomy 6:1-9 – Write God’s instructions regarding how and when to teach your children about God.
  - Psalm 78:1-8 – Write what these verses say about why you should train your children about God. What is the result of correct training?
  - Consider whether you need to make changes in your focus to teach your children about God.

# Lesson

# 8

## RAISING HEALTHY CHILDREN: Nurture and Train

### Objectives

- To learn ways to nurture a child's heart
- To learn methods of effective communication
- To understand that a child needs balanced and fair discipline

### Key Verse

*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. (Proverbs 22:6)*

### A. Nurture the hearts of children

As discussed in Lesson 7, Raising Healthy Children God's Way, a child's heart is like a field with different kinds of soil. That heart needs to be prepared to receive good seed (Mark 4:1-20). Children must be nurtured and cultivated if they are to bear positive, healthy and godly fruit. The example was made that when a farmer works in his field, he must do the following tasks before he will realize fruit.

- He clears the field of rocks and limbs.
- He plows the field to prepare it for the seed.

- He must be sure the field is protected from animals and insects.
- But most of all, he cultivates and waters the field so it will bear fruit.

The focus of this lesson is to nurture and train your children. The task of cultivating and watering the garden is a good example of nurturing. “*Nurturing*” means “*giving specific attention to something else in order to encourage growth.*”

Nurturing the hearts of children addresses an important aspect of raising healthy children. The seeds of truth and life must be sown into their hearts. Spiritually speaking, there must be a nurturing of that seed. Just as a garden can be vulnerable to things that keep it from being healthy, so also can a child’s heart.

How can parents nurture their children and cultivate their children’s hearts to produce godly, responsible and healthy fruit? The first section of this lesson teaches four important ways a parent can nurture (prepare) the hearts of their children so the parent can have a positive influence in their lives.

1. Spend time with your children
2. Give loving physical touches
3. Have meaningful communication
4. Provide balanced and fair discipline

The last section of this lesson teaches the Biblical reasons for disciplining children.

## **1. Spend time with your children**

As far as a child is concerned, there is no substitute for the time a parent spends with them. Children understand love by the amount of time given to them. For some reason, many parents do not feel that spending time with their children is a wise use of their time. This could not be further from the truth. When parents and children spend time together, they share life and become friends.

The parent must be diligent to spend time with their children. They may actually have to **schedule time** in their daily life to spend with their children. The parent must protect this scheduled time, or it will

not happen. Unless a parent makes it a priority to spend time with their children, other “good” things will take up their time, not their children.

Children need both “learning time” and “playing time” with their parents. When a mother or father gives consistent time to their children, the children feel valuable. When rejection, abandonment, fear and insecurity try to attack a child, time spent with their parents is critical. Time spent with a loving parent can stop the power of these enemies from entering and remaining in the child’s heart. That is why fathers and mothers must make spending time with their children a priority.

**Children need both “learning time” and “playing time” with their parents.**

## **2. Give loving physical touches**

Another way to nurture a child is with loving touches and positive physical contact. They need to be held, kissed and hugged often. They also need other forms of physical contact that communicate to them that they are touchable and loveable. Some of these include:

- Put your hand on their shoulder
- Hold their hands
- Stroke their hair
- Rub their backs
- Kiss them on the cheek or head

Obviously, the older the child becomes, the more sensitivity is required. But regardless of age, children always need to be hugged. It is a proven fact that children who are starved of affection exhibit behavior that is destructive to them. Studies have shown that infants who are not physically held and touched have more health problems. They eat less; and, in some cases, they actually die.

Physical touch is always to be given in the spirit of purity. Many nations and cultures deal with sexual abuse of children. Often, this sexual abuse happens in the home with relatives. This is obviously demonic and evil. The kind of physical touch being discussed here is the kind that communicates godly love and nurturing. It will never embarrass or violate the integrity or personhood of a child.

### 3. Have meaningful communication

Children need to know that they are significant. There are many things that express significance to a child, but communication is by far one of the most powerful. Parents need to communicate with their children in meaningful and loving ways. The following suggestions will help a parent communicate effectively.

#### a. Use tender words

The atmosphere and relationships in the home are set by a person's words. If parents are grumpy, sharp and harsh, the whole family is affected in a bad way. However, if parents speak lovingly, the family is affected in a good way.

Parents cannot tell their children too often that they love them. Many

<p><b>Loving communication:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ <b>Speaks blessing</b></li><li>✓ <b>Increases personal value</b></li><li>✓ <b>Binds a child's heart to their parents</b></li></ul>
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adults say that they do not remember hearing their parents tell them that they loved them. That is not a good thing. A day should never pass without a mother and father communicating their love to their children. Loving communication speaks

blessing into their spirit and soul. It increases the personal value they have of themselves. It also binds a child's heart to the heart of their parents.

Parents should never refer to their children in negative and mean ways. Words like "stupid," "dumb," "idiot" or "ugly" should never be used with your children. These words become curses to them. Children will begin to receive these words as truth and will define themselves through the negative words spoken to them. They will carry this wrong perception into adulthood until Christ brings truth that breaks the power of these words.

## b. Give frequent eye contact

When children talk, parents should pay specific attention to them. They need to turn to them and look them in the eyes. Sometimes, this is a very hard thing to remember to do. Often, a child wants to talk when the parent may be in the middle of doing something else. Eye contact expresses an attitude of attention and value. To the child, it means the parent considers them

worthwhile and the parent wants to connect with them. When parents do not give eye contact to their children, the children do not feel like their parents value what they have to say. Eye contact communicates acceptance, approval, value and concern.

Eye contact communicates:	
✓	Acceptance
✓	Approval
✓	Value
✓	Concern

## c. Practice active listening

Listening is one of the greatest acts of love one person can give to another person. This is true in regards to a parent listening to their children as well. There is a difference between passive listening and active listening. Table 8.1 shows “passive” listening skills versus “active” listening skills.

Table 8.1 Passive listening versus active listening skills	
<b>“Passive listening” is NOT a good way of communication with anyone, but especially with children.</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Passive listening is when parents do not look at their children when they are talking.</li><li>• It is not responding to a child’s words.</li><li>• It is when a parent walks out of the room when the child is in the middle of a sentence.</li><li>• It is interrupting the child when they are talking.</li><li>• It is beginning a conversation with another child or spouse while the first child is still talking.</li></ul>
<b>All of these things say to the child that they are not worth your full attention.</b>	

**Table 8.1 Passive listening versus active listening skills**

“Active listening” is a **VERY GOOD** way of communicating with children. It involves much of what has already been discussed

- Active listening is acknowledging what the child is saying.
- It is listening carefully to what the child is saying.
- It is responding to the child in a positive way.
- It means the parent gives feedback to the child.
- It is keeping good eye contact while the child is talking.
- It is asking questions as the child talks.
- Active listening is declaring to them that you understand what they tell you is important to them.

**Active listening keeps the lines of communication open. Children will continue to come to their parents, especially when they struggle with things that could cause them great harm, as they grow older.**

#### **4. Provide balanced and fair discipline**

There is yet a fourth thing that needs to be practiced in a consistent and godly way in order for a child’s heart to be nurtured. It has to do with the practice of discipline.

Disciplining children is a very important part of nurturing their hearts

**Discipline is a very important part of nurturing children.**

so they can grow up to be godly, responsible servants of God. They need balanced and fair discipline for their own protection. Because children are different in their personalities, attitudes, strengths and weaknesses, disciplining them can be challenging and frustrating.

#### **B. Biblical reasons for disciplining children**

Parents need to understand some foundational Biblical truths before they begin to walk in the responsibility of disciplining children



correctly. The Bible gives several reasons to discipline children in a godly manner.

- The condition of a child's heart demands consistent discipline.
- Proper discipline seeks a balance between correction and instruction.
- Consistent, balanced discipline promises to produce love, security and wisdom in children.

Each of these reasons will be briefly discussed in this lesson.

## **1. The condition of a child's heart demands consistent discipline.**

Children are born with the tendency to rebel. This tendency has to do with their sin nature. Every human being is born into a state of sinfulness. People are sinners by nature and by choice. Being born into sin, the heart desires to stray and walk in self-centeredness. At the root of sin is rebellion. Rebellion naturally struggles with authority. There are no exceptions.

**Children are born with the tendency to rebel.**

For example, watch very small children and notice that they are very self-centered. They will do almost anything to get their own way. Sometimes they scream, throw objects or pull the hair of their brothers or sisters. Sometimes they refuse to eat. And, in an act of defiance, they may tell their parents “No!” when asked to do something. The Bible clearly says that people are born into a place of sinfulness with the tendency to stray.

*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalms 51:5)*

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)*

*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him. (Proverbs 22:15)*

*Discipline your son, for in that there is hope, do not be a willing party to his death. (Proverbs 19:18)*

These verses are very clear that children need Godly and consistent discipline. **Strong, negative and sinful patterns will be established in the child's heart if discipline is not given by the parents.** These destructive patterns will affect him or her throughout their life.

## **2. Proper discipline seeks a balance between correction and instruction.**

When Paul wrote to parents in Ephesus, he used two words to define their responsibility: "training (discipline)" and "instruction."

*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the **training [discipline]** and **instruction** of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4 emphasis added)*

### **a. Discipline**

This verse is one of the main verses in the Bible that speaks of a parent's responsibility to train (or discipline) their children. The word "*discipline*" is a combination of the two Greek words "*child*" and "*training*." In its original meaning, it conveys the idea of training a child, but it also implies the idea of punishment.

Another Bible verse talks about God's correction of His children and how He will discipline those He loves.

*... "My son, do not make light of the Lord's **discipline**, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord **disciplines** those he loves, and he **punishes** everyone he accepts as a son." (Hebrews 12:5-6 emphasis added)*

**Therefore, disciplining a child is about correcting them after instruction is given.** Correction is a negative consequence experienced as a result of breaking an established instruction.

## b. Instruction

The other aspect of discipline found in Ephesians 6:4 is the word "instruction." This word comes from the Greek words meaning "to put into the mind."

"Correction" means "to introduce children to

what is right and wrong, to give direction, encouragement and wisdom." A parent is to give their children information about what they are to do (instruction) and what they are not to do (correction).

**A parent is to give their children information about what they are to do (instruction) and what they are not to do (correction).**

In the book of Proverbs, Solomon shared similar thoughts about a child's need for wisdom. This Scripture says that the importance of discipline and correction is to receive wisdom.

*The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. (Proverbs 29:15)*

According to this verse, a child's natural tendency is to try to get his or her own way. It is the "rod of correction" and the instruction in what to do that keeps a child away from rebellion.

There is a third biblical reason for parents to discipline their children.

## 3. Consistent, balanced discipline promises to produce love, security and wisdom in children.

*He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. (Proverbs 13:24)*

It is absolutely essential that parents set boundaries for their children. When parents do this, their children feel secure. Children will test the boundaries their parents set for them. They do this in order to see if their parents love them enough to correct and discipline them. This verse implies that discipline is an expression of love.

**It is absolutely essential that parents set boundaries for their children.**

An interesting study was conducted on children at a school play yard. The intention of the study was to discover if boundaries given to children on the playground actually restricted them or brought freedom to them. The playground had a fence around it which enabled the kids to play all over the yard even up to the fence itself. They took the fence down and observed the children to see how they would react. What the children did was a surprise to many. Instead of the removed fence producing a sense of freedom for the children, it actually produced fear. They moved to the center of the playground and very few would go to the outer edges of the yard as they had done previously. This study showed that boundaries actually help a child. Discipline with its boundaries gives great security. There are two principles that can be discovered as a result of these truths.

#### **Principles about love and discipline**

- ✓ **Discipline without love equals punishment in the heart of a child.**
- ✓ **Love without discipline creates insecurity in the heart of a child.**

It is extremely important that parents learn how to discipline and love with fairness and sensitivity. Parents do not want to break the spirit of their children. Strong-willed children need to have their wills brought under control and submission. However, parents do not want to destroy their children in the process of discipline.

### **SUMMARY**

- ✓ It takes a lot of effort to raise children correctly.
- ✓ Their hearts are very impressionable and vulnerable.
- ✓ This teaching has revealed how a parent can prepare the hearts of their children so fruitful lives can result.
- ✓ This lesson has also presented four ways to nurture children so they will live godly lives.

Lesson 9: Guidelines For Fair Discipline, focuses on 10 guidelines for fair discipline. In addition, it helps parents understand how to protect children as they grow into godly and responsible adults.

### ♥ Discussion Points/Questions

1. Divide your class into four (4) groups. Discuss each of the following areas. Have each group report their findings back to the class. Discuss what it means to nurture the heart of your child?
  - Provide scheduled time
  - Give loving physical touches
  - Have meaningful communication
  - Provide balanced and fair discipline
  
2. Review the differences between “active listening” and “passive listening” as presented in Table 8.1.
  - How is a child negatively affected when their parents practice “passive” listening?
  - How is a child positively affected when their parents practice “active” listening skills of communication.
  
3. Read and discuss the following Bible verses regarding discipline.
  - The condition of a child's heart demands understanding discipline. (Psalm 51:5, Isaiah 53:6, Proverbs 22:15, 19:18)
  - Discuss how correction and instruction can be balanced and fair. (Ephesians 6:4, Hebrews 12:5-6, Proverbs 29:15)
  - How can parents produce love, security and wisdom in their children. (Proverbs 13:24)

## **Application**

1. Make a list of ways you can nurture your children better. If you are married, discuss with your spouse.
2. Consider how you should communicate with your children. Some of these ways include:
  - Use tender words.
  - Give frequent eye contact.
  - Practice active listening.
  - Provide balanced and fair discipline.
- Do you always communicate effectively with your children?
- Which one is hardest for you to do?
- Discuss with your spouse how you can improve communication with your children. Write your thoughts. Practice these good communication skills in your daily life.

## Lesson

# 9

## GUIDELINES FOR FAIR DISCIPLINE

### Objectives

- To understand that it is the parents' responsibility to provide fair and balanced discipline for their children
- To understand that discipline must be consistent if it is to be effective
- To learn 10 guidelines for fair discipline

### Key Verse

*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him. (Proverbs 22:15)*

God has given parents the responsibility to be good stewards as they raise their children. Children are a gift from the Lord. They have divine destinies that God desires to fulfill in their lives. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the father and mother to raise their children in a healthy godly home so they can discover and fulfill God's will for their lives. Parents need to take specific steps in order to nurture and cultivate the hearts of their children.

Lesson 7, Raising Healthy Children God's Way, taught that parents have the responsibility to represent Christ to their children. Through the parents' example, children learn the importance of Christ in their heart. When children are raised in a proper environment, the parents can prepare the soil of their hearts to become godly adults. The point was made that children are like gardens. They must be nurtured and cultivated if they are to bear positive, healthy and godly fruit.

Lesson 8, Raising Healthy Children: Nurture and Train, taught parents the importance of nurturing the hearts of their children. Specific ways of nurturing include:

- Spend time with your children
- Give loving physical touches
- Have meaningful communication
- Provide balanced and fair discipline

The focus of Lesson 9 is to give parents guidelines for fair discipline. Many parents do not know the importance of discipline, and they do not know how to discipline their children correctly. They may continue a bad pattern of discipline started by their parents or simply choose not to discipline their children at all. Neither of these options is good.

## **A. Guidelines for fair discipline**

Fair discipline is essential in keeping the hearts of children open, teachable and tender. When parents are harsh and unfair in their

**Fair discipline is essential in keeping the hearts of children open, teachable and tender.**

discipline, anger and resentment are created in the hearts of their children. Unfair discipline can even create a desire to rebel. Disciplining children is a very personal thing. In fact, every person has experienced discipline in one way or another.

It helps to have basic guidelines to follow in providing discipline for children in a consistent, godly and healthy way. By practicing these guidelines, parents will avoid the warning Paul gives about parents provoking their children to anger.



*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4.)*

The remainder of this lesson teaches 10 guidelines to fair discipline.

## **1. Establish behavioral guidelines**

Let the child know what is desired or expected from them. It would be wrong to discipline a child for doing something wrong if the parent has not previously communicated their expectations to that child. Therefore, define specifically what they are expected to do or not do. For example, the child may be asked to wash the dishes, clean up their room or help prepare a meal. Or, they may be instructed not to jump on furniture, scream, show their temper or be mean and hateful to a brother or sister. Make sure the child understands what the expected behavior is. These expectations should always be consistent with their age, their ability to understand and do what they have been asked. Obviously, one would never ask a two year old child to carry the same responsibility as that of a ten year old child.

**Define specifically what children are expected to do or not do.**

For example: If a child exhibits bad behavior that has not been previously discussed with them, the parent must take action. The parent needs to sit the child down and tell them that this behavior is wrong and should never be done again. Then the parent should ask the child if they understand. When the child says yes they understand, they are agreeing to the guideline. Now the parent can give fair discipline if the child repeats the wrong behavior.

## **2. Give a clear warning with clearly understood consequences**

If a child violates the instructions given to them, the parent should confront the child's behavior and give a clear warning of what will happen if they repeat the wrong behavior. This step may be combined with Guideline #1 when you initially give them instructions on what you expect them to do or not do.

For example, suppose a five year old boy gets into the knives and starts playing with them. The parent begins to panic and say, "Son, you are not allowed to play with these knives." Then the parent gives them the warning and consequence. They say, "If you get these knives out again, you will be disciplined by not playing with any of your friends for one week." When a parent gives potential consequences for wrong behavior, there are a couple of things to remember.

- **The consequences should always be proportionate to the severity of the offense.** When defining the discipline, make sure it is a fair consequence to their level of disobedience. For example: The consequences for a child who does not pick up their clothes off the floor when told should not as drastic as those for a child who flagrantly and intentionally shows disrespect for a parent.

**When defining the discipline, make sure it is a fair consequence to their level of disobedience.**

Discipline should never be cruel. There was a recent instance where a parent put their child in a dark, enclosed room by themselves for a day. That was cruel discipline. It served no useful purpose. Discipline is always to be redemptive, not simply to punish. Parents need to remember that they will be held accountable to God for how they care for their children.

- **The consequence should always produce positive change.** If a parent takes away certain privileges as a consequence for an offense and it does not affect the child in a constructive way, that parent may need to change the form of discipline. Sometimes, spanking the child is most effective. Sometimes restricting them from playing with friends is more effective. Sometimes, doing extra chores around the house has more influence in producing change in the child's behavior. It totally depends on the child and the situation.

Parents can use many different forms of discipline to correct their children. They can spank them on their buttocks. (This will be discussed in more detail later in this lesson.) They can be restricted to a place to be by themselves. Some people call this discipline "time out." The child is sent to a private place (like sitting alone under a tree or sitting in a corner) so they can

think about their act of disobedience. Not being allowed to play with friends is a form of discipline. Giving the child extra chores or jobs around the house can be a form of discipline. Not allowing them to play with certain toys can be a discipline. The parent can tell over time which of these forms of discipline is more affective with each child. Remember, the point of discipline is for the child to experience a negative consequence as a result of their act of disobedience. They should associate pain, sadness and healthy fear with acts of rebellion and disobedience.

**The point of discipline is for the child to experience a negative consequence as a result of their act of disobedience.**

### **3. Discipline on the first offense following the warning**

One of the biggest mistakes a parent can make is to not discipline the child after the first offense. When a child has been told they are not to do something and then they do it anyway, the parents are fully aware they have disobeyed. The child does not need more warnings. To do so is to

**It is important to discipline the child on their first offense after a warning has been given.**

allow the child to control and manipulate their parents. It has been said that a child will push a parent as far as they are willing to be

pushed. If a parent keeps warning many times without following through with the discipline, the child will not respect the parent. In fact, they will continue to push until the parent takes action. Therefore, it is important to discipline the child on their first offense after a warning has been given. It is also important to warn the child before you discipline. The warning should include what they are doing wrong and the consequence for disobeying.

For example: Suppose the child is throwing rocks at people. This is how the parent might deal with this bad behavior. The parent would say, "Do not throw rocks at people. If you do, you will be spanked and will stay in the house all day doing housework." The first offense needs an immediate response. When the parents follow through with the consequences of their warning on the first offense, it gives

power to the parents' words. It also places respect in the heart of the child for his or her parents.

#### **4. Review the offense and define the discipline**

When the child has done something that merits discipline, the parent should say to the child, "Son, did I tell you not to throw rocks at people? What did I tell you I would do if I caught you doing it again?" The child responds, "You told me that I would be spanked and would have to stay in the house all day doing housework." The father replies, "That is right. Therefore, I am going to spank you and you are not to go outside today, but you will help your mother with the housework." In the event you do spank, it is important to tell the child how many spanks or swats he or she will receive. If your child wants to tell you why they disobeyed, give them time to talk. After they tell you, then help them understand why that behavior is not right.

#### **5. Avoid embarrassment**

If you can avoid it, do not discipline a child in public or in the presence of neighbors or friends. When a child is disciplined publicly, they feel humiliated. Many times the child develops resentment towards the parent or parents. If you are in public, it is best to excuse yourself and go some place more private to deal with the child. It is appropriate, however, to ask the child to communicate to those who witnessed their bad behavior that they are sorry for what they said or did.

#### **6. Communicate sadness over the offense**

Be sure to let the child know how sad you are over their behavior. Also, let them know how it saddens you to have to discipline them. This would be a good time to talk about God's heart for His children. Be sure to tell the child that they are not just hurting their father or mother by being disobedient and disrespectful. Point out that they are also causing sadness in the heart of God as well.

## 7. Never discipline in anger

Many parents face the danger of feeling intense anger when their children show disrespect or walk in open rebellion. As a result, parents can potentially punish their children out of anger. When they do this, they face the possibility of being too harsh in their discipline of the child. And, because of their anger, they communicate fear to the child rather than love.

When a parent feels overwhelmed with anger after a child has disobeyed, it is helpful to send the child to their room or outside until the mother or father has time to deal with their emotions. When they feel they can give discipline in a controlled manner, only then should they do so.

Many times, parents can become extremely angry and may verbally curse at their children. This action wounds their children's hearts. There are even instances when the parents use excessive force and actually hurt their children physically. Uncontrolled anger is different than strong displeasure. A parent should never discipline their children while they are truly angry. They should communicate to the child that he or she is angry with the child without reacting and disciplining out of uncontrollable anger.

**A parent should never discipline their children while they are truly angry.**

### **Dealing with discipline problems must start at an early age.**

When parents refuse to deal with disobedience and rebellion when their children are small, the patterns of defiance and rebellion intensify and become set in the children's hearts. As a result, the parents' frustration and anger increase as their children grow older. Sometimes parents over react in anger – and even physical abuse – because they neglected to begin the discipline of their children when they were young. Starting early and being consistent in discipline are essential elements in raising healthy and balanced children.

## 8. When spanking a child, always use a neutral object

Numerous times throughout the Bible parents are told to use "the rod." It is a word that means "*club*."

*He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. (Proverbs 13:24)*

*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him. (Proverbs 22:15)*

*Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death. (Proverbs 23:13-14)*

There are very good reasons for this. Children should associate their parents' hands with hugs, embraces, love and affection; never with pain and cruelty. Therefore, parents should never slap or hit their children with their hands. They should never kick their children with their feet.

A smaller neutral object needs to be used so it can bring a measure of pain without physical harm. Some parents use a wooden spoon for discipline. Some use a paddle. Some use a small tree limb. Children learn that this object is what will be used to discipline them. Thus, they do not learn to fear their parents in an unhealthy way.

God has made a part of the body that has enough natural padding that it can feel pain and yet will not physically harm the body. It is on the child's "seat" or "buttocks" that spanking needs to be administered. The parent has to decide when to spank or use other forms of discipline. Some people believe that spankings should only be used in the instances of rebellion or defiance. Each parent has to make that decision for him or herself.

## **9. Affirm and comfort the child**

After the discipline has been given, it is important for the parent or parents to share with the child that they love the child. They should tell the child that they desire more than anything for them to grow up to be responsible, godly adults. The parents should let them know that they believe in them. They should tell the child that they are trusting in the Lord to make them into the man or woman God intends them to be. It serves no redemptive purpose to keep placing shame and guilt upon a child after they have been punished.

## 10. Always be consistent

Consistency in discipline is what gives authority and power to the words of a parent. If parents stay consistent in disciplining their children, they will see wonderful benefits in the behavior and attitudes of their children. If a parent disciplines today and not tomorrow, the impact is lost. Children need predictability with their parents even in the area of discipline. When they have it, they are blessed. When rules change from day to day and are not applied to each child in a family with equality and fairness, children become frustrated, angry, insecure and rebellious. This is why there must be agreement on the part of both parents in what rules need to be set for the children and what discipline will be given if those rules are broken.

### **B. Result: Healthy children – fulfillment of God’s plan**

*Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:3-5)*

**Above all, parents need to understand that their children are God’s children.** Parents are stewards of destiny. God entrusts parents to raise their children to know and serve Him. Children are intended to be a blessing and not a curse. Parents can fulfill God’s best by seeing each young boy and girl as a child of God who could some day turn a nation to Christ.

## **SUMMARY – THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY**

- ✓ The family has always been God’s idea.
- ✓ The family is intended to be the foundation upon which civilization is built.
- ✓ Marriage becomes the foundation of the family.
- ✓ Children become the promise and hope of God’s heritage continuing from generation to generation.

- ✓ When families are built with God's wisdom and grace, blessing will exist without measure in the nations where they live.
- ✓ Parents are instructed to raise healthy children God's way.

Therefore, be committed to building Christian families and learn to enjoy the presence of Christ in your home. Where His presence is welcomed, you will discover God's peace, love and joy.

### ♥ Discussion Points/Questions

1. Discuss why it is important to begin discipline while the child is young. Why is it hard to establish discipline with older children?
2. Discuss what should be the proper attitude of the parents BEFORE administering discipline.
3. Discuss the 10 guidelines for fair discipline given in this lesson.
4. Using the information in this teaching, how would you communicate to a struggling parent why it is important that they discipline their child?

### Application

1. Discuss with your spouse the 10 guidelines to discipline.
  - Discuss which forms of discipline work best with each one of your children.
  - If you are not already disciplining your children, make a plan with your spouse to begin. Then be sure to stick with it.
  - Write this plan for future reference.



# Appendix

## Equippers Group International

### EGI's mission

**To provide user-friendly Biblical training and materials to under-resourced parts of the Body of Christ so God's people are equipped to be fully functioning followers and servants of Jesus Christ.**

*And the things which you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:2)*

### The need

The church seems to be growing fastest in places where believers have little opportunity for formal training. This quote is from the founders of EGI:

*After 30 years on the foreign mission field, we have observed that the majority of grassroots leaders in the emerging church do not have access to seminaries or Bible schools. Many churches have pastors without any Biblical training whatsoever. EGI was created to provide practical training and materials uniquely designed to meet these urgent needs.*

*Rev. Joseph (Joe) & Jo Hughes  
Founders, Equippers Group International*

There must be a way to reach these fellow believers and equip them with the tools they so desperately need to grow and multiply.

## **The vision**

EGI's vision is simple and direct: Equip leaders for effective ministry that equips others for multiplication. This vision focuses on these efforts:

- Provide training in each group's own language.
- Provide practical training related to essential elements of church doctrine and discipline.
- Provide believers with Biblically-based materials to equip them for the Christian journey and use in equipping others.

To meet the need, essential Christian materials must be created that are concise, comprehensive, easy to translate and easy to teach. They should cover the entire range of needs - from basic doctrine and disciplines to church leadership and mobilization. Wherever the Holy Spirit opens a door, partnerships can be made with existing church networks in target areas. EGI works with them to provide training materials, facilitate train-the-trainer sessions and do training as requested.

## **The strategy**

EGI's strategy to implement the vision is:

- Create Biblically-based training materials that can be freely translated and distributed. EGI has created a series of books for a training system called the Getting Equipped™ Series.
- Develop relationships with leaders of church networks in target areas.
- Strategize with national contacts to determine how EGI can best help believers in that country.
- Partner with leaders, set priorities and develop a plan to bring needed training to that region of the world.
- Celebrate the growth. Release each church to fulfill its unique purpose through local leadership.
- Implement the plan. Often, an EGI representative will conduct the initial training session for pastors and church leaders. This

“train-the-trainer” session launches EGI’s Series and materials and begins the process of multiplication and mobilization.

- Measure effectiveness through follow-up with church leadership. This assures accountability for each leader and continual improvement and feedback for EGI.

The Holy Spirit is our greatest Partner and Leader in this effort. To the best of our God-given wisdom and ability, we will move whenever and wherever He directs.

*So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. (1 Corinthians 3:7-9)*

## **The Getting Equipped™ Series**

The Getting Equipped™ Series is EGI’s response to this urgent need for materials. It consists of training manuals that cover the major elements of Christian doctrine, discipline and leadership. While comprehensive in scope, the Getting Equipped™ Series follows guidelines that make it relatively easy to translate and read. It provides a practical, Biblical path that takes believers from early conversion to church leadership. Key points that make this series highly desirable are:

- Biblically based
- Written without church clichés and western cultural references
- Practical and doctrinally balanced
- Each lesson includes application exercises
- User-friendly design

The Getting Equipped™ Series is constantly being expanded with new topics, publications and translations as the need arises. Contact EGI for the current list of publications.

## Published manuals

See EGI's website, [www.equippersgroup.org](http://www.equippersgroup.org), for current translations.

***Facilitator's Guide to the Getting Equipped™ Series***

Currently available in English, Gujarati, Russian and Spanish.

***Equipped Through Basic Beliefs Of Christianity (2004)***

Currently available in English, Kiswahili, Russian and Spanish.

***Equipped Through Bible Study Skills (2005)***

Currently available in English, Russian and Spanish.

***Equipped Through Genesis: The Book of Beginnings (2006)***

Currently available in English and Russian.

***Equipped Through Missions and Church Planting: A Practical Guide (2006)***

Currently available in English.

***Equipped Through The Christian Family (2008)***

Currently available in English.

***Equipped Through Stewardship (2008)***

Currently available in English.

## Translations

As each manual is published in English, it will also be translated into other languages as the opportunity arises. Contact EGI for the current list of translations.

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