

God Give Us Christian Homes



Forum Terrace Church of Christ

**Sunday Morning Adult Bible Class
Fall Quarter 2024**

A Workbook by Daniel R. Vess

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Faithful Facts for Fixing the Family

The family as God created it is under constant attack from all corners by a wicked world. The sexual revolution has results in pre-marital pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and failed marriages. The answer is not in Sex Education. The answer is respect for marriage as the only place for safe and legal sex. *"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge"* (Heb. 13:4). But marriage is no longer considered a holy matrimony between a man and a woman. The world is coming to recognize homosexual marriages. These couples are going on to raise children and thus change the face of the family. Most marriage are ending in divorce due to No-Fault divorces. The divorce rate has risen 700% in this century and continues to rise. Children are frequently treated like pawns on a chess board. Many people are living in marriages that are not scriptural because they have not been divorced according to God's will Matthew 19:3-9. Working mothers have left their children to raise by strangers or by themselves. Over 2000 years ago, Socrates asked the Athenians, "Fellow citizens, why do ye turn and scrape every stone and gather wealth, and take so little care of your children to whom one day you must relinquish it all?" Meanwhile the number one killer of children under five years of age is child abuse. Paul wrote, *"Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully"* (1 Tim. 5:14).

Ronald Reagan wrote, "The family has always been the cornerstone of American society.... America's families make immeasurable contributions to America's well-being...it is essential that ...each of us remember that the strength of our families is vital to the strength of our nation." The home, which God designed to be the cradle of civilization and the bulwark of nations, has been neglected by husbands, deserted by wives, and despised by children. Remember the old adage: "as goes the home, so goes the nation".

What can be done about the decline of the American family? The following suggestions are aimed at assisting us in fighting for the family on the home front.

▶ **Respect the Family as God Made It**

There is a Divine design of the home. The home gives honorable birth to children. Illegitimacy is both sinful and shameful in regard to parents and frequently embarrasses the offspring. Please remember, there are no illegitimate children only illegitimate parents.

Parents protect the child and help him to grow strong physically. The family trains the child. As one parent prayed, "God, help me to realize that this is not just a mouth to feed but a living soul to train."

A family foundation begins with a man and a woman joined in marriage. Furthermore, God designed marriage to provide companionship (Gen. 2:18-23). The only honorable and safe place for the God-given desire for sexual relations is within marriage (Heb. 13:4). Try as he might man will never be able to replace the home. All such efforts only lead to unhappiness and the further moral decline of our nation.

▶ **Lead Your Family Into the Ark of Safety**

Noah's family lived in a very corrupt society (Gen. 6:5). God instituted a plan by which they were to be saved. It involved constructing an ark according to His pattern. Noah did all that God required (6:21) and his family was saved via the ark. We are to imitate his obedience through baptism (1 Pet. 3:20,21). Upon baptism we are added to the church, your ark of safety (Ac. 2:47). National surveys tell us that persons who fit the category of "very religious" tend to be happier, more goal-oriented, and have a higher level of achievement. Children brought up in church are very seldom brought up on charges before a judge. It takes Christ to make a family of Christians. Make Christ a part of your family.

▶ **Limit the Influence of Evil**

When Abraham offered Lot the choice of the land for his flocks, Lot chose the best fields. He also made the choice to pitch his tent toward Sodom. Soon his family was living in Sodom, a place so wicked that God chose to destroy it. Lot was only able to save his two daughters by fleeing the cities of the plain.

The home is a haven from the wicked world. At times no place is nearer to heaven on earth than the Christian home. Nonetheless, one cannot allow the influence of Hell to be given place in your homes and expect a haven. To keep from "pitching our tent toward Sodom" there are several things we can do. 1) Control the TV, Internet, and cable. 2) Don't go to places with unwholesome atmospheres. Christians who allow their teenagers to go to the beach or the prom where there is immodesty, a party where there is drinking are placing young souls in danger. This is true even if their children do not participate. 3) Be selective where you live. Certainly, Lot wished he had been more discriminating. 4) Be choosy about what goes into your child's mouth, veins, and mind. A popular ad for a peanut butter says, "Choosy mothers chose Jiff". We need to be "choosy" about many things with regard to your families.

▶ **Spend Time Together**

Every hour of every day there is something to be done. If we breakdown our week of 168 hours into the various things that occupy our time we would find that the average Christian spends 56 hours of his week sleeping, 45 hours working, 20 hours of entertainment, 10 hours of personal grooming, 8 hours eating, (its interesting to note here that it takes more time for us to fix our face than to stuff our face), 6 hours of housework, 5 hours of traveling and 4 hours of worship and Bible studies. Thus, we are left with 14 hours of time to spend. How do we spend it?

Too many people are not spending any of this time with their families. The only family time they have is in front of the TV set. Parents spend too little time with their children, especially in a private, family-circle atmosphere. The following story is lifted from "Saturday Evening Post" magazine, and though it was meant as a joke, it represents a serious circumstance: "At the dinner table the wife of the habitual golfer said, 'Junior told me that he caddied for you this morning.' 'That's it!' exclaimed the golf addict. 'I knew I'd seen that kid somewhere before!'" Raising children is very important. It cannot be accomplished without spending some of our precious time. Some parents say they "can't find time", but they must take time from something they're doing that is less important than the children. For junior to become a "chip off the old block," the "old block" must be around to be chipped on. Remember, "*Train up a child in the way he should go and even when he is old he will not depart from it*" (Pr. 22:6).

A man was once asked, "How long have you been married". "We've been happily married seven years" then he added "and seven out of twelve isn't bad". Husbands and wives are not happy together mostly because they don't spend time together. Husbands and wives need to stop the clock long enough to get acquainted. This is done by withdrawing oneself from the rat race.

The Bible says in Eph. 5:16 "*making the most of your time, because the days are evil*". What this is saying is, we are living in troubled times therefore rescue time from waste. The best way to rescue it and invest it properly is to spend more time with the family and less time with work, TV, hobbies, friends, etc. Remember, families that pray together, stay together.

▶ **Carefully Choose Healthy Forms of Entertainment**

Would you bring prostitutes home as entertainers for family night? It is Friday night and a family of Christians is making preparations for their entertainment. They order pizza then find a movie for the family to watch. During the movie the adults and children alike watch a woman bare it all in the corner of their living room while they stuff their mouths with popcorn. Surely, no Christian would hire a stripper to come home with them for family recreation! However, many are doing just that when they carelessly chose such form of entertainment. This is not limited to just movies. Channels like MTV provided immodest dancing and singing combined pornographic lyrics. The biggest offender of them all is the internet with universally accessible porn.

But what is so wrong about seeing movies and music videos that have a couple of scenes of explicit sex or nude and semi-nude men or women? After all, this is just entertainment and recreation? There are several good reasons why this is spiritually unhealthy. 1) It will lower one's level of discretion. We are effected by what we see and hear. Paul warned in I Cor. 15:33, "*Do not be deceived. Evil*

companions corrupt good morals." If you are entertained by prostitutes you will eventually be corrupted by them. Moreover, what we allow our minds to dwell on will determine what kind of person we will be. *"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he"* (Prov. 23:7). 2) It destroys our shamefastness. Years ago when just one curse word was uttered in the movie "Gone with the Wind" America blushed. Today, many Christians don't even blush at the coarse language and vile scenes viewed day after day. After viewing so many scenes of sexual promiscuity our moral senses become dull. Then our conscience comes seared to the extent that we feel no sense of shame when sex scenes via the TV screen are seen. The ability to blush at this point is gone even as one watches a couple act out fornication. 3) Our hearts can become desensitized to sin. We must remain sensitive to sin. Passive indifference is a danger point in our efforts to remain pure. It is not a sign of maturity to come to the point where we no longer feel vexed over perverse entertainment. It is when we begin to feel comfortable with others' sinfulness that we are dangerously close to being complacent with our own sin. As the poet Alexander Pope wrote in his Essay on Man:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Instead of following the world's standards for entertainment may we be like Job, who said *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"* (Job 31:1). Parents should remove such forms of entertainment from our homes *"that you may become blameless and harmless, children of god without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world"* (Phil. 2:15).

▶ **Following God's Laws**

"Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you--` a land flowing with milk and honey." (Deut. 6:1-3).

▶ **Remember the One True God**

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (Deut. 6:4). This verse has been called the *Shema* from the Hebrew word translated "hear". Families need to know the one and only God.

▶ **Wholly Love the Lord**

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart" (Deut. 6:5,6). Total commitment is required. This is not a family heart but each individual must love God with his heart. Remember, God has no grand children.

▶ **Diligently Teach Children**

Parents must indoctrinate their children. That is, they must put God's doctrine (teachings) in the hearts of their children. *"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates"* (Deut. 6:7-8). The word "diligently" in Hebrew literally means "to sharpen". To have sharp or wise children requires parents to work hard at training them. The passage does not require mothers and fathers just to hang up nice plaques on the walls and rugs on the floor quoting scripture. Whenever and wherever the family is going whatever the truth is to be deposited into their little minds. For example, discuss a good point from the sermon on the way home.

▶ **Greatly Revere the Lord**

"So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, "houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant-- when you have eaten and are full-- "then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. "You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. "You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you `for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth" (Deut. 6:10-15). A family should respect God too much to disregard His ways or disobey His will. Neither will they forget all the good He has done for them.

Like the prairie bison and the sperm shale and the crane, the family is fast becoming an endangered species. We shake our heads and passively think What a shame! Instead we should bow our heads and pray. *"And My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chr. 7:14).*

God give us Christian homes!
Homes where the Bible is loved and taught,
Homes where the Master's will is sought,
Homes crowned with beauty Your love has wrought;
God give us Christian homes!
– Baylus B. McKinney

Questions:

1. List ways the family is under attack today.
2. How important is the family to society and civilization?
3. How designed or created the family and for what purpose?
4. Why is it so hard for families to spend quality and quantity of time together?
5. What are some things families to spend time doing together which will have a positive effect?
6. How does the viewing of semi-nude to nude entertainment destroy individual shamefastness?
7. List four things commanded of families according to Deuteronomy 6:1-15.

8. What is meant by "leading your family into the ark of safety"?
9. What mistakes did Lot make with regard to his family and evil influences?
10. When and where can Christians talk to their children about the ways and laws of the Lord?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some things a family can do to limit the evil influences from the world around them?
2. What are ways parents can help to handle the evil influences of media and recreation upon their family?

Homework: Pray this week for God to give us Christian homes.

Beneficial Truths From the World's Longest Marriage

Part One

Which couple holds the world record for the longest marriage? Here's a clue: our text will be Genesis chapters two and three. As you have guessed the world's longest marriage is that of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were married the first day of their lives. (Talk about robbing the cradle. They were only a day old). Just do the math. Adam lived to be 930 years old. If Eve was alive to celebrate their 930th birthday together, they would have also celebrated their 930th wedding anniversary. What gift could you give someone for their 930th anniversary? Gold-plated, diamond studded walkers?

The first couple had a marriage made in paradise. Literally! Just thing about it, they never had to deal with in-laws. Adam never told Eve, "You sure don't cook like my mama!" Eve never replied, "You sure don't make money like my daddy." No arguments as to which family to visit or which reunion to attend. They could not put down each other's father, because God is perfect. When Adam heard Eve say, Adam did not fear to hear Eve say, "I have absolutely nothing to wear" he was confident she was not subtly implying she was going on a shopping spree for a new wardrobe. Likewise, Eve never heard Adam while in Paradise yell, "I'll wear the pants in this family!" Later after sin he was heard to say, "I'll wear the plants in this family". Adam did not have to come home in the Garden to find Eve sporting a new belly button ring. After all, she had no navel to pierce. Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden could not complain how much better things were in the good old days. They did not date each other and anyone. So Adam did not have to listen to Eve talk about all the guys she could have married. And Eve did not have to put up with Adam's pick up lines, like: "Have we met before?" Since they had not known each other for a long time before marriage, there was no baggage to bring into their marriage. No previous spouses or children from a previous marriage. Their Father picked both the bride and the groom in this arranged marriage. A perfect couple picked by a perfect Father. With a perfect marriage like this, what could possibly go wrong?

When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about divorce, Jesus sent them back to the first marriage. He said, "*from the beginning it was not so*" (Mt. 19:8). The beginning of man and sin is closely related to the genesis of marriage. Jesus obviously regarded the account in Genesis as historical, not allegorical. If it is mere mythology, Jesus was deceived, for He certainly looked upon the incident recorded here as being historical and factual (Matt. 19:3-6). So, what can be learned from this perfect marriage?

Purpose of Marriage: Companionship

- **Declaration of God**

After the sixth day of Creation, God surveys His work and pronounces it good (1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). One thing was not "good" in that it was lacking the finishing touch of God's creative hand and design. "*And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone"*" (2:18a). The phrase "*not good*" is not the same as evil, but only that it was unfinished and therefore imperfect. When something was "good," it was operating as God intended it to function. Surely, Adam's wife was in the mind of God long before she was ever in the arms of Adam.

- **Realization of Adam**

Why was woman a special creation apart from man? After all, God made all the animals and

plants with their gender counterparts. Perhaps, God wanted Adam to understand the need for marriage to a woman. So, God paraded the animals before Adam, each having its partner. He names each one. His naming of the animals was an exercise of authority. So today we have designated the duck-billed platypus, dung beetle, and dodo bird. Makes you wonder what Adam called them. After this zoological parade Adam would have wondered, “why don’t I have a mate?” God deliberately awakened in Adam a sense of need, an awareness that he hungered for human companionship. Man needed to feel loneliness, to impress upon him how important his partner is to his life and happiness. Animals bring forth after their kind (1:22,24). Adam would not be able to procreate by himself. Even more importantly there is the need for companionship. It is possible for a man and a dog to have great fellowship. The fellowship must be on the dog’s level, because the man can only communicate on that level. Adam could exert rulership over them, he could not have companionship with them. Animals cannot associate with man on a spiritual level. No animal had been made in God’s image. “*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them*” (Gen. 1:27).

Notice God does not say it is not good to be single, but alone. George Gilder’s book *Naked Nomads* shows that statistically men need wives. For a man to remain single was “to court disaster,” for “a man with no roots, no one to worry about him, to look after him, is lost.” Another study concluded that single men are six times more likely than married men to die of accidental falls. No wife to say “whoa! man.” (Perhaps that would be a good definition of the role of a marriage woman, “whoa, man!”) At any rate, God knew man needed a wife, and He made this need clear to Adam.

On a side note Adam was not an evolutionist. “It is abundantly clear and certain that he had not recently evolved from them. If the latter were true, and his body were still essentially an ape’s body...it seems strange that he could have found nothing in common with either parents or siblings” (Morris 98).

● **Operation on Adam**

Adam could do nothing about this situation. He could not choose who create his own mate. This could only be accomplished by God without the help of the man. The Hebrew word for “*rib*” is *tsela* appears thirty-five times in the Old Testament and this is the only time it has been rendered “*rib*.” The term simply means “*side*.” It is usually used to refer to the side of a building or room. Why did God create man before woman? God did not need any advice for either gender. God could have asked Adam what kind of mate he wanted, but instead, God put Adam to sleep and solved man’s problem without any assistance.

Design of Marriage: Divine Perfection

● **God Created a Solution**

Man’s problem was the need of a adequate companion. God’s solution: “*I will make him a helper comparable to him*” (2:18b). Marriage is God’s idea. It is His creation, not man’s. Society through human traditions did not develop this institution between a man and a woman. God is the architect of holy matrimony. Only He holds the patent on it. There is no expert on marriage comparable to Him..

● **God Created a Wife**

The woman indeed is the last act of creation. She is a special creation. Just as Adam was “*formed*” from the clay, Eve was “*made*” from his side. The Hebrew word for “*made*” is *banah* and is translated “*build*.” God built up from Adam the perfectly designed woman. Just as a contractor builds a perfect house to suit the needs of the couple. Adam married not only a special creation of God, but a child of God via an arranged marriage.

● **God Created Perfectly**

“*Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day*” (1:31). When each day of creation had been completed God saw His work was God, that is, “*appropriate*.” Now when all creation, including man and woman (Gen. 1:26,27) God notes His work is “*very good*” or perfect. Genesis chapter two should be regarded supplementary and not contrary to chapter one. Paradise was not a perfect home until God made Eve. She is Adam’s perfect mate – because she is complementary to his whole person. She is strong where he is weak, and he is strong where she is weak. Eve was married to the perfect man. Adam was married to the perfect

woman.

Divine Partner in Marriage: God

God made marriage. Whatever God makes is good. For He has said in His word, "*Let marriage be held in honor among all*" (Heb. 13:4). Marriage is a three-fold relationship. Which consist of a man, a woman, and the founder of marriage God. As long as both the man and the woman look unto God as the third cord in their marriage then the proverb will hold true which says: "*A three-fold cord is not quickly broken.*"

Seeing, God as the Creator of marriage, we must respect His commandments on marriage. He is the third-cord which is the sustainer and protector of this divine institution, marriage. Therefore, He has set down in His Holy Word, responsibilities for the husband and the wife, so that their marriage will last a life-time. "When a couple says 'I Do' it is a commitment to the God given duties of marriage in which the mutually agree to fulfill to one another. As marriage is a joyful privilege, it is also a serious responsibility. So holy is this relationship that Paul likened it to Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-34).

Compatibility of Marriage: Equal but Different

God made Eve as "*a helper comparable to him*" (2:18a). The term "*helper*" is from the Hebrew *ezer*. The term is not demeaning to the woman, because the same term is used by God for Himself (Ex. 18:4; Dt. 33:7; 1 Sam. 7:12; Pss. 20:2; 46:1). Eve was designed by God to be a helper who can correspond to Adam's distinctiveness. Man was created in need of help. His job in the Garden was to work it and take care of it? This calling applies to the woman as much as it applies to the man.

The other term of importance is "*comparable*" from the Hebrew term *knegdo* meaning "*like*" and "opposite" of "according to his opposite." Eve was Adam's "counter-partner." A wife is her husband's equal. However, equal does not mean the same. The number two and the number nine are equal. This is true only in the since they are both numbers. However, they are different in that they represent a different sum.

Eve was made from Adam's side. Why? Matthew Henry observed long ago: "she was not made out of his head, to rule over him; nor out of his feet, to be trampled on by him; but out of his side, to be equal with him; but under his arm, to be protected; and near his heart, to be beloved." The term "*head*" often represents superiority while the "*feet*" represents inferiority in the Bible. However, the term "*side*" can be used to represent equality. Eve was thus made from Adam's side, to work alongside in carrying out the divine commission to "*fill the earth*" and to "*subdue.*"

Biblical marriage results from the union of opposites. Eve was made for Adam, made from Adam, given to Adam, and named by Adam. He said she will be called "*woman*" because she was taken out of man (Heb. *ishshah*, taken out of *ish*). These Hebrew words are the male and female counterparts of each other. (You might say that creating Eve was the splitting of the first Adam).

Men and women are different. God made them that way. These differences are irreconcilable. Irreconcilable differences do not warrant a divorce. The only way to avoid irreconcilable differences is to marry one's self.

Atmosphere of Marriage: Joyful

When God first brought Eve to man "*Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh'*" (2:23). His response was one of great joy. Keil and Delitzsch explain that Adam's words are, "expressive of joyous astonishment." Adam is saying, "Now at last!" according to Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown. To paraphrase his thoughts: "This is what I've been looking for all my life." Adam was "beside himself!" It was love at first sight.

The first wedding ceremony was quite simple. Adam's vows "*bone of my bones*" was used later as an idiom to represent "blood relations" (Gen.29:14; Judges 9:2; 2 Sam.5:1). Adam's first lesson was to learn to appreciate his wife. He tells Eve "you are part of me." Husbands today should love their wives as though God had literally taken one of their own ribs and formed his wife for him.

Social Arrangement of Marriage: Separate Family

After Adam's outburst of joyful vows accepting Eve, God goes on to explain: "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother*" (2:24a). Genesis 2:24 is found in Matt. 19:1-6; Mark 10:1-8; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; Eph. 5:22-33. Notice the term "leave" literally means to forsake. True, neither Adam or Eve had parents, but the point is: marriage begins with the establishing of a new relationship. Marriage is not simply a private arraignment between two people - a marriage begins a new social arrangement. All other human institutions came from this divinely designed and ordained marriage. Marriage is clearly more than just a piece of paper. It is the beginning of a new three-fold relationship between a man and a woman before God.

Some have argued Adam and Eve were never married, thus making all their subsequent children, including us, illegitimate offspring. When God took the woman from Adam's side He then brought her to Adam to initiate the first marriage. God was the first "Father of the Bride" and the first presiding minister.

Sexuality of Marriage: Exclusive

The second fact about the establishment of marriage is: "*and they shall become one flesh*" (2:24c). Paul used this to point out that even when a man has sex with a prostitute, he becomes one flesh with her (1 Cor. 6:16). This phrase in Genesis is in reference to the sexual union in marriage. Others see in this a link between sexuality and creativity, that is, the one flesh of their child.

Marriage is an exclusive physical relationship. It excludes fornication. A couple who are even engaged to be married cannot shack-up. Sexual relations of any kind are permitted by God only when the two are first married (Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:2). Once married they must remain free of adultery.

Gender of Marriage: Heterosexual

In Genesis chapter one the Bible student is informed of the general account of creation. Concerning the creation of mankind God made them in His "*own image*" and He made them "*male and female*" (1:27).

This excludes homosexual marriage. God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. However, in 2015 on the twenty-sixth day of June the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment requires all states to grant same-sex marriages and all states to recognize these marriages from other states. The first president to support homosexual marriage while in office was Barak Obama. He declared, "This ruling is a victory for America. This decision affirms what millions of Americans already believe in their hearts. When all Americans are treated as equal, we are all more free." Now with this 5-4 ruling the Supreme court has change the legal definition of marriage in all fifty states.

Questions:

1. Who do you think had the longest marriage recorded in the Bible?
2. Why is it important to God back to the beginning to understand God's plan for marriage?
3. Why didn't God created woman at the same time as man?
4. What was God's purpose for marriage?

5. What are men not missing a rib today if God used man's rib to create woman?
6. How is God divine partner in every scriptural marriage?
7. How can a husband and wife be equal while being different and having different roles?
8. How did Adam react when God brought Eve to him?
9. What statement in Genesis two demonstrated that marriage is to be sexual exclusive between just the husband and wife?
10. Show from the first marriage that God never intended for homosexual marriage.

Application & Discussion:

1. List ways mankind has redefined marriage.
2. What are some ways Christians can promote marriage as God's designed it in the beginning?

Homework: Thank God for marriage and couples who exemplify good marriages.

Beneficial Truths From the World's Longest Marriage

Part Two

The institution of marriage is under attack. Society and the government have been undermining the very foundations of marriage. *"Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes"* (Eccl. 7:29).

The single underlying cause of marriage's demise is the same as it was in the beginning. Men and women have selfishly chosen what looks good, seems good, and feels good, to them over God's Will. The same God who made everything very good made marriage. Hedonists view the monogamous relationship God created as monotonous. Hedonism is the ethical theory that pleasure (in the sense of the satisfaction of desires) is the highest good and proper aim of human life. Such is the love of self in this self serving "Me" generation. This worldview only leads to innate selfishness where men and women clamor for "my rights" and "my happiness" over God's sure way to be happy. Yes, God wants all men and women and those who are confused as to which category they fall into to be happy.

The sign that hung in the Hollywood jewelry store: We Rent Wedding Rings illustrates the common tragedy of divorce in our world. Some wonder, "is it realistic and right to enforce a 50-year contract on a 20-year old couple?" Is God right in enforcing a 930 year contract on a day old couple? No matter what the courts may decree or society may permit, when it comes to marriage, God had the first word and He will have the last word. The word in the Word is: *"God hates divorce"* (Mal. 2:10). Why? Because divorce destroys the permanency of marriage.

Not only has divorce destroyed part of the foundation of marriage. Homosexual marriage has destroyed the gender in marriage. Pornography and nudity has destroyed the modesty of marriage. Adultery has destroyed the exclusivity of the marriage arrangement. There is now a widespread acceptance of adultery. Some believe that adultery is often a tonic for a lackluster marriage and may well revive it. It is not true that adultery helps failing marriages. Adultery actually destroys them.

To save marriage we need to go back to the beginning when God instituted it in Genesis.

Duration of Marriage: Lifetime

After the man leaves his former relationship in his father's family he creates a new one by being *"joined to his wife"* (2:23c). *"Joined"* or *"cleaved"* is from the Hebrew word *dabaq* meaning to cling to, to hold to, as bone to skin. It is used for Eleazar's hand which cleave, froze, to the sword he held tightly in battle. Historians tell us that warriors' hands firmly gripped to swords for so long in battle, these warriors had to soak their hands in hot water in order to release their grip. The Greek word for *"cleave"* in the New Testament is *kollao* from *kallo* meaning glue or cement. The term is used to show the permanency of marriage.

Notice it is God, not the State, which does the joining. Jesus said it was God who joined together Adam and Eve. He said, *"so then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."* (Matt. 19:6). The husband and wife are "glued" together. As two they now equal one. And they as one cannot be divided to equal two. So marriage is not to be divided. A husband and wife are cemented together to the point that the two cannot be separated without damage to both. Any damage to the divine institution of marriage is an affront to marriage's Creator.

There are only two legitimate ways to end a marriage. The first one is rather obvious, death. As

the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 7:2,3 *"For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man."* Surely we are to be married till death do us part.

Although couples today are divorcing for any cause under the sun, Jesus only recognizes one reason for divorcing your spouse. In Matthew 5:31,32 He said, *"And it was said, Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of dismissal, but I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."* Adultery is the only acceptable cause for divorce according to Jesus.

With divorce so popular and easy to obtain young couples need all the encouragement they can get to remain married. Far too many Christians are abandoning the clear Biblical standards on the longevity of marriage. Some even have gone so far as to teach that divorce is acceptable for any reason so long as the two do not remarry. In fact, Paul taught just the opposite. *"Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart (divorce) from her husband. But even if she does depart (divorce), let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife"* (1 Cor. 7:10,11). Note Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:3-9. He made it very clear that no man could divorce his wife for just any reason. Furthermore, God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), because no matter what the reason someone has sinned and His institution of marriage is disparaged.

Unity of Marriage: One

Many wedding ceremonies use the unity candle. It is often used to represent two families creating a new family as the bride and groom marry. Two candles are lit at some point in the service. From these two candles the middle candle is lit and the couple blow out their individual candles to symbolize the extinguishing of their two single lives.

At the end of the very first wedding when God brought Eve to Adam they had no mother or father. However, God summed up the uniting of these two as one when He said, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"* (Gen. 2:24). This statement is repeated twice more in the Bible: once in the Gospel of Matthew and again in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. Beside the physical aspect, the implications of these verses are various. First, a man and wife are no longer part of a mother/father family. So a spouse should not run home to mom and dad every time something does not go their way. They are now life-long companions and best of friends all the rest of their lives. They should no longer think "me", "mine", "I", "my", etc. but "we" and "us." They have learned how to share their life together. A little girl once asked her mother why there was a bride's cake and a groom's cake. Her mother said she did not know. The little girl offered an explanation of her own. She said, "Its because they haven't learned how to share yet." Perhaps, there is a lot more truth than humor in her remark. Couples need to learn how to share. One final implication needs to be made. The great thing about two being one: it is easier to count on each other (Gen. 2:24). God never intended for marriage to be a 50-50 proposition. Whoever said that doesn't know the half of it. God intended marriage to be a 100-100 submission where the man gives 100% to being a husband and a woman gives 100% to being a wife.

Number of Marriage: Monogamous

Notice God said that *"a man shall ... be joined to his wife"* (2:24b). God brought Eve to Adam. He did not bring Eve, Betty, Gertrude, etc. Adam was not given a choice and he was not given multiple partners. God's design of marriage is for it to be monogamous. He purposely excluded polygamy, concubinage, polyandry, communal living, wife swapping, affairs, etc.

It seems that monogamy is not as popular as it once was. Man has always had problems with God's arrangement of one man and one woman married for one life time. But why are so many leaving monogamous relationships for affairs and even bigamy?

Why is monogamous marriage being rejected? Some believe that monogamy is a man-made

construct. So if man made marriage monogamous, man can just as easily change marriage to being an open sexual relationship. Although the term “monogamy” is not found in the Bible, God created marriage to be monogamous from the very beginning. A true monogamous relationship does not allow for any sexual activity outside the marriage. Still it is argued that monogamy is not natural. Franklin Porter, Ph.D. said, "I don't feel like it's natural to be in a monogamous relationship. From an evolutionary standpoint, men are wired to impregnate multiple women to further the species." But God create man and woman to be monogamous from the beginning. Barbara Kingsolver, in *The Poisonwood Bible*, wrote “we Christians have our own system of marriage, and it's called Monotony.” Mankind would like the term “monogamy” better if it sounded less like “monotony.” The Bible does not describe marriage as monotonous. *“Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love”* (Prov. 5:18-19). *“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord”* (Proverbs 18:22), Actress Scarlett Johansson told *People Magazine* that the idea of monogamy is too hard. "I don't think it's natural to be a monogamous person. I might be skewered for that, but I think it's work. It's a lot of work. The fact that it is such work for so many people—for everyone—the fact of that proves that it is not a natural thing.”

Intimacy of Marriage: Innocent & Transparent

The final statement regarding the first marriage is a somewhat confusing: *“and they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed”* (2:25). Why were they naked and not ashamed? Since they were the only two humans on the planet, privacy was not an issue. Since there was no sin, there was nothing to hide from each other. Consider the perfect unadulterated degree of intimacy between them. In childlike innocence they see no need of clothes. Young children are not embarrassed to streak naked through a room full of people. They are not conscious of sinful thoughts. Adam and Eve's nakedness (*rummim*) is contrasted to the serpent's craftiness (*arum*) by means of wordplay. It speaks to a level of naivete. It is a picture of “before” sin contrasted to the “after” sin entered the picture in 3:7.

Conflict in Marriage: Sin

What happened to the “very good” in marriage? With all the first couple had going for them, you would have thought Adam and Eve would have lived happily ever after. After all God gave them one simple restriction to their diet. God gave them one simple law to obey. *“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’”* (Gen. 2:16,17). God the Creator has determined that this tree is unfit for human consumption.

The main cause of the first marital discord remains true for marriages today. Adam and Eve failed to obey God's commandments. They were listening to someone other than God. Eve listened to the serpent instead of obeying God. Adam listened to his wife over God. They listened to the lusts of their flesh and eyes, and the pride of their life over the loving Will of God.

The first marital discord begins in Genesis 3:1–7. It results in shame, guilt, and hiding from God. The shame of nakedness is linked unmistakably to sin. Sin always hinders intimacy, even in marriage. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they recognized their nakedness and began to hide themselves, not only from God, but also from one another. Next, they tried to bury their guilt by playing the Blame Game. Satan used sin to divided and conquer the first marriage. Adam blamed God and the woman. Eve in turn blamed the serpent. God blamed them all. The first thing to remember in any marital conflict is to remain united as a couple to fight the problem not the person. When a couple fight each other they are not able to work as a team to deal with the problem which caused the rift in the first place.

Protection of Marriage: Modesty

The problem of sin brought on their self-consciousness of their immodesty. *“Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them”* (3:21). Only God can cover the shame

brought upon us by the feelings of guilt over sin. The same Hebrew word is used for creating the world is used here again for God creating clothes. Although Adam and Eve were the first fashion designers in making aprons of fig leaves, they realized they were still naked. God had the first dress code. Man-made coverings will not work; they must be God-made. Even though they were married to each other and there was no one to lust after them - nakedness was still shameful. Ever since that fateful day in the Garden males and females alike need to control their minds and dress modestly to discourage sexual arousal outside of marriage (Matthew 5:28). Immodesty before the world can and often is fatal to a marriage.

Women are beautiful and every bride is pretty. However, far too many brides expose too much skin on their wedding day. Unfortunately, too many continue this behavior long after they have packed up their low-cut, no back wedding dresses. In Titus 2:5 women are to be instructed by older women to be "chaste". This does not mean they are to dress in such an immodesty manner that they will be "chased" by men, but chaste or modest before men. Vine tells us the word means "pure from carnality, modest." The reason is that God designed the human body to be attractive to the opposite sex. Dress or the lack thereof which causes a man other than one's spouse to lust is immodest. When united in marriage your bodies are not your own to do as you please without regard to your spouse and others (1 Cor. 7:4).

Men know men. They know how they think. Men can tell women what is modest or not. So brides, if your husband does not think you ought to wear something because it is inappropriate do not call him "controlling" or "jealous." Instead you should appreciate his insight and protection.

Organization of Marriage: Corresponding Roles

As a result of the divisive and disrupting nature of sin. God had to assign roles to marriage.

"To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return'" (3:16-19).

These God-given roles are not to be abused. A husband must be the head of the family, not a headache to his wife and children. Men have grossly dominated women, as property and an object to be used and exploited. The wife should take a submissive role. After all, *"man was not created for woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake"* (1 Cor. 11:9). Some women who would never dream of usurping a man's authority in the public worship assembly do so daily at home. Many times a man "puts his foot down" about something only to have his wife come along and stomp on his foot until he moves it.

Mission of Marriage: Procreation

Returning to the first chapter of Genesis we learn of the mission of marriage.

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (1:27,28).

Clearly, procreation was not the primary purpose of marriage. Woman was not created merely to be a reproductive partner. Adam was not looking among the animals for something to reproduce by. Just as food was not the purpose of the garden. Marriage was for the purpose of companionship. Bearing children was the duty of mankind as it was the design for animals to reproduce after their kind. Bearing of children is an important part of the marriage union (1 Tim. 5:14).

Conclusion

Marriage is under attack, but marriage can be saved. It is true even Christians, who promise "until death do us part," can have it all fall apart. And the truth is, no relationship comes with a lifetime guarantee. However, couples need to dig out the instruction manual and start reading it!

When marriage first came under attack there arose out of the conflict a prophecy of hope for all of mankind. God promised, *"and I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel"* (Gen. 3:15). Two thousand years ago, God would leave Heaven. God would become the seed of the woman. God would die on the cross so all men could go to Heaven.

Questions:

1. In what ways is marriage under attack?
2. How do we know God intended for marriage to be a lifelong commitment?
3. What are the only two legitimate ways to end a marriage?
4. Why is unity in marriage so important?
5. Why do some reject the idea of monogamy in marriage?
6. Why were Adam and Eve naked and not shamed in Genesis chapter two but shamed of nakedness in chapter three?
7. What problems did sin bring to the first marriage?

8. How does modesty protect marriage?
9. In what areas can a wife demonstrate chaste behavior?
10. What roles did God give wives and why?
11. What roles did God give husbands and why?
12. What is the mission of marriage and why?

Application & Discussion:

1. If God hates divorce why does He allow it for adultery?
2. What role can a husband play in assisting his wife in wearing modest clothing that professes godliness? Why?
3. How did marriage result in a solution for sin?

Homework: Find a couple who demonstrates a marriage as God would have it and encourage them.

Duties of Christian Wives

God's design from the beginning was for the wife to be a suitable companion for her husband (Gen. 2:18,20). It means that God made her to be compatible and appropriate to her husband's needs. She provides for his needs, not his wants. She is his confidante and companion, not his slave or employee. Peter gives a list of things which can help her be the complete help to the husband in 1 Peter 3:1-6

● **Be Submissive**

So far in his first letter Peter has commanded Christians to submit before God (1:14,15), before the world (2:11,12), as citizens to the government (2:13-17), as servants to their masters (2:18-25), and now as wives to their husbands. *"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands"* (1 Peter 3:1a). The word translated *"submissive"* is a military term that means "to place under rank." Soldiers who are called to rank will drop whatever they are doing and immediately fall in. The Phillips Version renders it, "adapt yourselves to your husbands." The New English Bible says, "accept the authority of your husbands."

"Submission" is that dirty word that subjugates and demotes wife to such an inferior status. The world's standard is that there can be no fulfillment in being a wife and mother. They are convinced that submission is tantamount to slavery and the victimization of women. Although some husbands and societies are abusive that does not make Paul's command unfair. *"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything"* (Eph. 5:23,24).

True, submission is "voluntary service out of selflessness." A wife voluntarily gives to her husband an attitude of cooperation. This enables both husband and wife to function together in a productive relationship. When a problem comes up and a decision has to be made the democratic system of one vote for and one vote against will resort in a stalemate every time. Someone has to give in or nothing will ever get done. God has come up with a solution to these stalemates. The wife is to be willing to submit to the husband. Even nature illustrates this with mountain goats who meet on a narrow ledge on a steep cliff. They can start fighting and butting their heads and fall to their deaths. Instead, one goat will willingly lay down and allow the other to walk over him safely to the other side. This is a win-win solution for both goats.

To be a submissive wife does not mean recognizing the man's headship as a dictatorship. She is not to be a "door mat." Our Lord allowed women to discuss, challenge, and reason with Him (Mk.7:26-30; John 4:1f). Submission does not mean the woman is inferior to the man. It has nothing to do with equality or morality, but order and role. The buck private in the army may be a better person than the five-star general, but he is still a buck private. Subordination does not mean women are inferior to men intellectually, morally or spiritually, but in God's order of authority, the woman is to be in subjection to man (1 Cor. 11:3).

The term *"likewise"* indicates an example has already been given as the end of chapter two of First Peter. Just as Christ was in submission to the Will of God and to Pilate and the Jewish rulers. He did so even though it involved unjust suffering on His part. Wives with unbelieving husbands may also suffer innocently as Christ did.

Submission has boundaries and limitations. Wives are to submit to their own husbands not to every man. Her submission is *"as unto the Lord"* and *"as the church is subject to Christ"* and *"in everything"* (Eph. 5:24) and *"as fit in the Lord"* (Col. 3:18).

The Bible gives several good reasons for the submissiveness of the wife to the husband (see 1 Tim. 2:8ff). The man was created from the earth; the woman *“from the body of man.”* The role of man in marriage is leadership or headship. The role of women is care for children and the home. When two people disagree it can be resolved by force or by subordination. When the wife willingly yields to her husband in matters not already determined by the Will of God, she allows for headship and family harmony.

● **Be Silent Soul Winners**

The idea of submission can be complicated when a Christian wife is married to an unbeliever. Peter suggests a wife’s submissiveness can help in such situations. *“That even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives”* (1 Peter 3:1b). Sometimes wives have to make a choice to serve Christ or family (Matt. 10:34-37). This is one reason why it is wise to marry a Christian. But there are times when one becomes a Christian and the spouse does not. They are to remain married even though it may be more difficult. Paul does not advise the wife to leave her unbelieving husband (1 Cor. 7:13-16).

In such situations a wife can work to change her unbelieving husband into a Christian. Peter tells her this can be accomplished not by preaching or arguing with him. In fact, she can do this *“without a word.”* Of course he is not suggesting she is not to speak at all to an unbelieving husband. Without a lot of talking or nagging her conduct as a Christian before her husband can result in her winning him to Christ. She wins him with her life not her lips. Submission becomes her silent instrument to preach Christ.

This advice is still valid today for wives winning their husbands to Christ. I have seen several godly women practice this with great results. While in Florida a young woman who had been restored called and talked to me about what she could do about her husband who was not a Christian. " I don't think that he will accept a Bible study with you or come to church. When I try to discuss it with him he only gets upset." Well, I referred her to the passage quoted above. She went home and went to work. In four months her husband obeyed the gospel.

This advice from Peter not only works for women who have non-Christian husbands, but for those whose husbands have fallen away. I had been working with a couple who had moved into the area, yet failed to start worshiping with a local congregation. For six months I tried to set up a study with the husbands and for six months he would set aside a time and then cancel or not show. Finally, his wife called in tears to explain. It turned out that he was an alcoholic. She didn't know what to do. The first thing she had to do was to return to the Lord. Then she needed to practice Peter's advice. Four years later after many temptations, trials, heartaches, set-back, desertion, fights, suicide attempt, cases of beer, being hit by a cab her husband returned to the Lord. Today, the whole family are faithful and free from alcohol.

In 1 Corinthians 7:16 Paul asked this question to such wives, *“For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband?”*

● **Be Reverent and Pure**

Her silence is not without actions. Peter goes on to explain: *“when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear”* (1 Peter 3:2). The word *“observe”* literally means “having closely observed.” Just as the husband observes the football game with his eyes glued to the TV set, so his eyes will be upon the good deeds and words of a godly wife. Though husbands may be deaf to a wife’s words a times, they are by no means blind to her actions. Two things he should notice: her reverent behavior toward him and her pure or chaste conduct before the world. Thayer refers to this as “pure from every fault, immaculate” (8). For example, she is to dress before other men not to be chased by them but to be chaste.

● **Be Beautiful**

Far too many times women will resort to using her feminine physical charm to motivate and manipulate men to get what they want. This is not the solution suggested by Peter. Instead of sex appeal he wants them to appeal to her man from the standpoint of her inner beauty. *“Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which*

is very precious in the sight of God" (1 Pet. 3:3-4). A husband should not be won over to Christ with fancy hairstyles, shiny jewelry, and an expensive dress. With the inward change of "clothes" he notices how she is adorned spiritually with love, joy, peace, self-control, etc. By this he may be attracted.

Peter is not prohibiting women from wearing jewelry or make-up. He is using a Hebrew idiom (or form of speech). The apostle is making a contrast ("not this...but this") for the sake of emphasis. For example, "Let it not be...the wearing of gold...but let it be the hidden person of the heart." If there is a prohibition of wearing any gold jewelry, then by the same logic one would have to argue that no garments can be worn. After all the word for "*adorning*" is *kosmos* in the Greek. Our English words "cosmos" and "cosmetic" are derived from it. It is the opposite of chaos. She is to first and foremost to focus on her inward life to make sure it is not in a chaotic state but rather beautified. This is in opposition to using an ostentatious display of their worldly and expensive adornment which has no positive effect on the soul. Attempt to win her husband like this would be akin to those who try to attract sinners in the world by building and decorating a very fancy church building.

Outward beauty is and has always been popular. Why not? After all, God is the artist who has created all the beauty of this world. He made the rainbow, the stars in heaven, the flowers that bloom, the snow capped mountains, etc. Cosmetics is a multi-billion dollar industry. Fashion magazines often serve as prophets of idolatry. Christian women should not spend eternity getting themselves fixed up externally. Every woman wants to be beautiful. Wearing too little clothing as well as wearing too gaudy adornment can lead to sin.

Whereas outward beauty can be a cover-up for a wicked heart, inner beauty is true. Inner beauty focuses more on who a woman is on the inside than what she looks like on the outside. Inner beauty is the only beauty which is eternal. Clothing will wear out or get dirty. Skin will wrinkle. Hair will turn gray and thin out. Jewelry will tarnish.

The inward beauty is a gentle and quiet spirit. Gentle or meek "is the temper of spirit in which we accept his dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting" (Trench 152). "Quiet" is that which "causes no disturbance to others" (Vine 3:242). When women lose their youth to the effects of aging they must "*not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day*" (2 Corinthians 4:16). All need to remember that it is the inner heart and its beauty which is most appealing or pleasing to God.

● **Be Trusting of God**

Holy women in the Old Testament put their trust and hope in God. This hope yields a meek and tranquil spirit. "*For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands*" (1 Pet. 3:5). Consider Hannah who wanted a son. God answered her prayer with a son. When he was weaned she took him as promised to the Temple and gave him to the High Priest, Eli. Although Abigail was married to a fool she trusted God and did the right thing toward God's anointed, David. She was later married to David due to her inner beauty of wisdom. Although Sarah did not always trust in God, her faithfulness to Abraham proved to be a reward when she bore Isaac in her old age. "*As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror*" (1 Pet. 3:6).

● **Be a Daughter of Sarah**

Wives are encouraged to be daughters of Sarah in the sense of spiritual descent. Just as Abraham represented the ideal man, so Sarah is symbolic of a submissive wife. Sarah was a beautiful woman. When she was sixty-five years old she was still able to attract attention of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Later, at ninety years of age she attracted the attention of another king in Canaan. Although many women of history are known for their beauty such as, Helen of Troy or Cleopatra or Marilyn Monroe, yet Sarah had more to offer women of all ages than just good looks.

First, she had a great relationship with her husband Abraham. She was submissive and called him "*Lord*." This occurrence took place in Genesis 18:12 where she is not speaking to him but about her husband. The term used in the Septuagint is not the Greek *despotes* but a term which could be translated "Sir." A good wife, like Sarah, shows respect to her husband when she speaks about him. Sarah died at the age of 127, Abraham was simply inconsolable. He wept and mourned for Sarah for

days.

Next, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham. That is when he spoke, she listened to what he had to say with a submissiveness of spirit and a desire to obey.

Finally, she was calm and quiet, trusting in God who had made promises to her and her husband, Abraham. *“By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised”* (Heb. 11:11). At first Sarah laughed to herself when she heard the angels tell Abraham that a son would be born within the year (Gen. 18:12). God rebuked her saying, *“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”* (Gen. 18:14-15). Sarah learned to trust in God.

- **Be Good Not Afraid**

Wives of today will be blessed if they too learn to trust and hope in God and fear no man. They need to do what is good regardless of how bad things are or even how bad their husband may be behaving. By so doing they will have no reason to fear. Whatever comes their way they are not to become overly frightened or alarmed. If they practice goodness they will not need to fear their husbands or their God.

Peter's list of duties for a wife is not all-inclusive. The Bible mentions other duties of wives toward their husbands. Titus has no less than seven sound teachings for older women to teach the younger women. *“The older women ...teachers of good things that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed”* (Titus 2:3-5).

- **Love Husbands**

Younger women must be taught to *“love their husbands.”* Husbands are commanded to love their wives (Eph. 5:25,33). There Paul uses *agape* whereas here he uses the rare term *philandros* which literally means love of husband. Christian women are to learn to love their husbands. “Love” is something that is commanded and therefore something that can be learned. In many ancient and/or eastern cultures couples are chosen for one another and may have never met till the day they were wedded. Can a woman learn to love her husband? Rebekah was brought five hundred miles from her home to marry a 40-year old man whom she had never even seen. They had to learn to love each other and not simply “fall in love.” When a couple confess they just do not love each other like they did instead of being taught how to love each other many times today they are instructed to find someone, else so they can be happy. Failure to love one's spouse is a sin.

The problem with today's standard of marital love is endurance. True love lasts through difficult times. When William Bennett heard a couple state in their contemporary wedding vows “...so long as we both shall love” he sent them a set of paper plates as a wedding gift. This type of love will come and go as emotions do.

- **Love Children**

Not only are women commanded to love their husbands but *“to love their children.”* This motherly love should come naturally however mothers can be void of natural affection (Rom. 1:31). This can be seen today as mothers chose abortion because a child would be such an inconvenience to their current plans and lifestyle. Just as love for their husbands is commanded and therefore must be learned and practiced, so it is with the children. Some husbands and children are more loveable than others. But Paul does not place conditions on their love for them. Pathetic husbands and problem children are to be loved. This love means she will make the sacrifices to unselfishly perform whatever needs to be done for the well-being of the child. Some mothers will argue when it come to spanking that they “love their children too much” to do this. However, it is a lack of love to fail to discipline them when needed (Prov. 13:24).

- **Be Discreet**

Younger women must *“be discreet.”* This is the same command given to older men in verse two. They too must use sensible self-control and prudent conduct in life.

- **Be Chaste**

Young women are to be *“chaste.”* From the Greek word *hagnos* which means “pure.” Many women are taught to act, talk, and dress before the world so they can be chased.

- **Care for Your Home**

Although the next command is not politically correct, women are to be homemakers. Other translations have *“keepers at home.”* Which has been construed by many to mean in effect “keep her at home.” The worthy woman to Proverbs 31 did not stay at home but also worked outside the house. Other good and noble women of both the Old and New Testament worked outside the house. Nonetheless a Christian woman’s special domain is the home and she should make it the top priority. Every one needs a manager and she is the one who supervises the home even if her husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:22ff). The home is not a dungeon for a prisoner, but a palace which the realm of the queen’s rule.

Paul also wrote, *“Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully”* (1 Tim. 5:14). This does not mean she is a housewife. After all, she did not marry a house. She is the wife of a man. Green informs us that the Greek means “a keeper or guard of a house.”

When a wife is managing her home she is the 1) Director of Health, Education and Welfare; 2) Secretary of the Treasury; 3) Head of Entertainment and Public Relations; 4) Chairman of the House Rules Committee; etc. In fact, she can never be paid what she is worth.

- **Be Kind**

Naturally, younger married women must be *“good.”* This is often translated “kind.” Whatever, wherever and whenever she is to be beneficial to others in word and deed.

- **Be Obedient**

Finally, older women should teach the younger wives to be *“obedient to their own husbands.”* This is the result of submission or being in subjection. This is a virtue that wives can learn not something that is just naturally demanded of her by her husband. The Greek term “does not mean to obey, but to accept the relationship that God has designed, voluntarily subjecting oneself to God’s order and fulfilling the responsibilities that come with it” (Barton 270). The wife is the husband’s helper and she is most suited for that role (Gen. 2:18). Husbands need to be aware that true subjection cannot be demanded but is given, it cannot be forced, but it can be learned.

Before moving on to instructions for young men, Paul gives the motive for young wives practicing these healthy commandments from the Lord *“that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”* The eyes of the world are on the wives and mothers of the church. Younger widows were to fulfill their duties as to *“give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully”* (1 Tim. 5:14b). The enemies of God do not need to be given any more ammunition to hurl against the Truth. God’s Wisdom is tarnished by the scandalous behavior of some young wives. Many unbelieving husband will be either won to Christ or railed against based on the behavior of the wife (1 Pet. 3:1,2).

- **Help Your Husband Go To Heaven**

Wives can help win the souls of their husbands for the Lord. Couples need to realize the role they play *“as being heirs together in the grace of life”* (1 Peter 3:7).

The Bible has focused on plenty of wives who discouraged the spiritual life of their husbands instead of encouraging them to be faithful unto the Lord. Eve tempted Adam with her disobedience to God in the Garden. Job’s wife spoke as one of the foolish women when she instructed him to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). Solomon’s many wives lead him away from God to serving idols (1 Kings 11:1f). The idolatrous Jezebel “stirred up” King Ahab to do evil. In the New Testament Sapphira conspired with her husband Ananais to lie to God (Acts 5:1-11).

God created wives to be a help suited for their husbands (Gen. 2:18). They are commanded to seek instruction from their husbands (1 Cor. 14:35). Christian couples are to pray together (1 Pet. 3:7). They should work together like Priscilla and Aquila to save souls (Acts 18:22ff). This is the only way to make marriage become a foretaste of heaven.

Conclusion

The book of proverbs also speaks about the success of marriage and the value having a good husband and a good wife. *“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord”*

(Prov. 18:22). *“Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ‘Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all’”* (Prov. 31:28,29).

It is doubtful there are many husbands who actually merit the type of Christian woman described in these verses. They are more likely only three such men. Do not ask me who the other two are. I have yet to meet them.

Questions:

1. How were women treated in the first century?
2. Why is it essential that someone submit in the marital relationship?
3. What are some “silent” ways or things a wife may do to help bring her husband to Christ?
4. What are husbands to “observe” in their Christians wives?
5. Does Peter condemn women wearing jewelry and putting on make-up? Explain.
6. Can a Christian woman become too concerned with hair and nail salons, high-end fashions, cosmetics, plastic surgery, fitness programs? Explain.
7. Give some Bible examples of women who trusted in God?
8. How can a Christian wife today be a daughter of Sarah?
9. How is it that if a wife does good she does not have to be afraid?

10. Contrast inner beauty with that of outer beauty?

11. True False Love for husbands and children is something that can be learned.
12. What does it mean for a wife to be "*obedient to their own husbands?*"

13. How does a mother and wife express love toward her children and husband?

14. How is a wife to help her husband make it to heaven?

Application & Discussion:

1. Why is it best for the older women to teach the younger women? What are the pros and cons of a older woman verses a young preacher teaching the Ladies Bible Class?

2. In what ways is the word of God being blasphemed because many wives and mothers are not following sound doctrine?

Homework: Thank your mother and find a good example of a mother and express your gratitude.

Duties of Christian Husbands

Dr. Aubrey Andelin, in his book *Man of Steel and Velvet* mentioned some things that wives want from the husbands: to be loved, cherished; a master to rule over them; a voice in matters which concern them; sympathy when they suffer; appreciation; a feeling that their domestic work is important work; and personal freedoms: Time to do things. Right to go places.

Since God created marriage He knows the needs of wives better than any wife or man. He has given commandments for husbands to fulfill in regard to their wives.

➤ **Provider**

The scriptures do not designate the husband as sole provider of financial income (Pr. 31). However, he has the main duty to care for the physical necessities of his family (1 Tim. 5:8). At the same time he should never be compelled to supply his families' every want, but their every need. Also, he cannot use how good of a provider he has become to prove that he is a good husband and father.

➤ **Lead and Love Her**

To "lead" without loving is cruel and to "love" without leading is a "cop out" on God's concept of husbanding. Paul commanded, *"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as 'the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,"* (Eph. 5:22-24). *Better Homes and Gardens* did a survey which asked: "Do you think the dominant role of the husband in the American family is declining in importance?" 79% said "yes". "Would you consider a decline in the husband's dominance to be good?" 71% said "No."

The leadership role does not mean superiority or permit a "tight-fisted dictator". It doesn't mean being waited on or having the best piece of chicken. He must realize that what authority he has is not really his, but all his authority originates in God.

➤ **Be Kind And Considerate to Her**

Paul commanded, *"Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them"* (Col. 3:19). Courtesy is "love in trifles" - it shows we care. One lady said, "it is passing the salt to me first." When people stop being considerate, they start taking each other for granted. Consideration is doing to others what you would have them do to you (Mt. 7:12). Phoning when you see you are going to be late, calling home in the evenings when you are out of town, picking up after yourself, and never inviting company over without the knowledge and consent of your mate. Men remember, "If a man has enough horse sense to treat his wife like a thoroughbred, she will never turn into a nag."

➤ **Submit to God-given Role**

After commanding women to be submissive to their husbands (1 Peter. 3:1-6), Peter not address husbands and demands they must likewise submit to their God-given role in marriage. *"Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered"* (1 Peter 3:7:). The term *"likewise"* refers to the husband's need to be submissive to his role just as the wife is to her role and as Christ was to His. A marriage must be based on reciprocal obligations.

It may not seem fair to have six verses for women and only one for husbands. However, the theme of 1 Peter has more to do with suffering as a Christian. Due to the nature of marriage in the first century more women would suffer if their husbands were not Christians than vice versa.

The Bible does not give husbands the right to be tyrants. Cato of ancient Rome wrote, "if you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her with impunity without a trial; but, if she were to catch you, she would not venture to touch you with her finger and, indeed, she has no right." This

verse teaches that wives of Christian husbands do have rights.

Although no where in the Bible is a husband commanded to be obedient to his wife, husbands must be obedient to the will of God concerning their leadership in the home. The facts from the creator of man, woman, and marriage has not changed: man was first in creation, woman was taken from man, the woman is the glory of man and the woman was made for the man and not the man for the woman (1 Cor. 11:7-9). These facts enter into the order or structure that God ordained. They take nothing from the dignity of the woman nor her standing with God. Men must not abdicate their God-given duties. As one father said, "I let my wife decide whether the children are to go to Sunday school and church. That's her job." Some others act like nothing more than grown-up little boys who have never taken responsibility and are content to leave it all up to their wives.

A wife once advised all husbands about their role in the home as head or leader: "Don't yield your leadership, that's the main thing. Don't hand us the reins. We would consider this an abdication on your part. It would confuse us, it would alarm us; it would make us pull back. Oh, we will try to get you to give up your position as Number One in the house, that is the terrible contradiction in us. We will seem to be fighting you to the last ditch for final authority on everything for awhile, but in the obscure recesses of our hearts we want you to win. You have to win, for we aren't really made for leadership."

Two Commandments for Husbands

● Dwell with Them

The command to live with or dwell with one's wife has several implications. First, he must physically abide in the same home as his wife. Far too often there are some cultures where men keep a wife in a house and visit them without living with them. This is very hard on a marriage. This is true even if it is necessitated by his military service or his business affairs.

Just living in the same house is not enough. It is possible for husband and wife to spend a lifetime in a small home and never get to really know each other. One survey revealed that the average husband and wife had thirty-seven minutes a week together in actual communication.

Perhaps, this command will also demand that husbands provide for their wives both in physical and material needs. Even more so he should help her spiritually by spending time together.

Peter not only commands husbands to live with their wives but tells them the manner by which they are to do so: "*according to knowledge.*" Get to know your roommate. Husbands know all about sports, guns, monster trucks, and power tools, but very little about their wives. Men will often joke that they simply cannot comprehend their wives. They believe that women are beyond their ability to comprehend. As Churchill described Russia, women are "a mystery wrapped up inside of an enigma." Books like *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women* by James Dobson and *Women are from Venus and Men are from Mars* demonstrate that husbands have a great need to comprehend their spouses. This does not require them to read everything by Martha Stewart or watch *The View*. However, God would not require men to understand their wives unless it were possible. Once I had a new groom confess that he could and never will understand his wife. He was shocked when I suggested that he had better repent. After all, understanding a wife is part of God's commandments to husbands.

The Phillips translation reads "*live considerately as trying to understand.*" This is not only an ongoing duty, but the only means by which spouses will be able to get along with each other in the same abode. Communication in marriage is indispensable. There is no way the president of a corporation can effectively lead unless he knows the organization "inside out." Marriage will not be what God ever intended it to be unless husbands get to know their wives.

● Giving Honor to the Wife

He is to give, that is, portion out to her: "*honor.*" Paul says he must nourish and cherish her (Eph. 5:29). This does not mean to give into the wife. As head of the family he will have to make decisions which affect the wife. These must be made with knowledge of the wife and done so while respecting the wife's feelings, thoughts, and desires. To give her honor is to render to her a just amount of self-esteem. Chivalry may be dead, but every husband must be a "knight in shining armor" who treats his wife like a princess. By the way, the name Sarah means "princess."

To honor or esteem the wife requires husbands to accurately assess their value. To value their work at home and for the home. To esteem her highly in one's opinion. To demonstrate her importance.

The manner in which she is to be honored by her husband is by treating her like "a weaker vessel." To give honor to that which is weaker seems paradoxical. "Vessel" is a word applied to men (1 Th. 4:4). Man and woman are alike vessels - vessels made by God for His service. The woman is the weaker vessel, and must, for that very reason, be treated with gentleness. Weaker how? She is not to be regarded as the lesser partner in the marriage. She is not weaker mentally or morally. This is not to say she is of less value spiritually. However, physically a wife is almost always weaker than her husband. "Vessel" is sometimes used to mean body (2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Th. 4:4). Because she was designed by God with the role of childbearing and caring, she is different and more delicate physically. Women get pregnant and men do not. God told man after the sin in the garden that he would make his living "by the sweat of his face" (Gen. 3:17-19). He is the provider (1 Tim. 5:8). The woman's role of childbearing and keeper of the home (Gen. 3:16; Tit. 2:5). God promised the woman that he would "multiply thy sorrow and thy conception" (Gen. 3:16).

Her emotions are different from her husbands. Things that may seem minor and insignificant to a man, to the wife may be a crisis bringing her tears. She is weaker like a fine piece of china but still far more valuable than the coarse piece of crockery used to make pickles. She must be treated with care. One wife complained, "my husband simply takes me for granted. To him I'm another piece of furniture around the house. I'm only important to him for what I do for him, not for what I am."

Again, Peter gives the manner in which this command to honor the wife is to be obeyed by the husband. The husband must remember that their relationship is not just with themselves but with the God of their salvation. They may be different with different roles, but they are still "joint-heirs of the grace of life." An heir is "...one who obtains something assigned to himself with others, a joint participant" (Thayer 593). They clearly have the same spiritual rights to all that God has to offer. This does not mean she has the same role in the church and can become an elder, deacon, etc. Remember, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are equal but have different roles. Since the wife also was created in the image of God, there is no distinction between male and female in regard to salvation of their souls (Gal. 3:28).

Warning to Husbands

These two commands for husbands come with a warning. If he does not dwell with her in an understanding way or honor her as the weaker vessel, their spiritual life may suffer and his prayers will not be regarded or honored by God. It is assumed that the husband and wife do pray and may even pray together. Literally, the phrase is, "so that your prayers will not be detained." Like the man who was detained at the Mexican border for forgetting to respect the Mexican laws by bringing into their country contraband. Husbands who do not respect God's laws with regard to how he treats his wife will find his prayers detained before they reach the Father's throne.

Why would God detain their prayers? When people suffer at the hands of others, God will still hear and notice their cries in heaven. Marriage is a three fold bond. If you cannot maintain a relationship with your wife, you will lose the relationship you have with the Lord. When husbands and wives are bickering, quarreling, and striving with each other, God will not listen to them. An unforgiving husband cannot expect his prayers for forgiveness to be honored. God has a right to accept or reject worship or prayers (Mal. 2:10-17).

The solution: if husbands are having a conflict with their wives they need to take care of it before the sun goes down (Eph. 4:26f). Remove the obstacle to your prayers before you go to sleep at night. Husbands and wives your eternal destiny depends on how you treat your spouse.

Questions:

1. What does the Bible say about a man who does not provide for his wife and/or family?

2. How can a husband express kindness and consideration to a wife?
3. How does a husband demonstrate submission in marriage?
4. What does the term "*likewise*" imply in 1 Peter 3:7?
5. Is it okay for a husband to turn his role of head and leader of the family over to the wife? Explain.
6. What all might the command "*dwell with them*" imply?
7. What can a husband do to assist him in understanding his wife better?
8. Define "*honor*"?
10. How is a wife a "*weaker vessel*"?
11. How are husband and wife joint-heirs? How can they help each other get to Heaven?
12. What warning does Peter give husbands? Why?

13. What is the solution to the consequence of the husband failing to obey these two commandments?

Application & Discussion:

1. Why six verses about the duties of wives and only one verse for husbands?

2. What can a wife do if her husband refuse to take leadership in the marriage?

Homework: Make of list of things which make for a great husband.

A Christ-like Husband's Love

Ephesians 5:25-32

Marriage in the ancient world was in shambles. Demonsthenes said, "we have courtesans for the sake of pleasure; we have concubines for the sake of daily cohabitation; we have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately, and of having a faithful guardian for all our household affairs." Xenophon said it was the husband's aim that a wife "might see as little as possible, hear as little as possible, and ask as little as possible." Socrates asked the ancient Grecian husband: "Is there anyone to whom you entrust more serious matters than to your wife - and is there anyone to whom you talk less?" In Palestine the Jewish Rabbi Hillel allowed a man to divorce his wife for virtually anything. Marcus Cato, the famous Roman statesman of the second century B.C., wrote, "If you catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her without a trial. But if she were to catch you, she would not venture to touch you with her finger. She has no rights."

Today marriage is in trouble. General Montgomery of World War Two told his men: "Gentleman, don't even think of marriage until you've mastered the art of war." Recently Neel Burton in an article in Psychology Today titled "A Feminist Critique of Marriage" wrote, "To partake in the institution of marriage in the 21st century is also to condone the historical abuses perpetrated in its name...At a time of unparalleled social freedom, why, say many feminists, should we limit ourselves to an inauthentic, monotonous, and potentially calamitous life of state-enforced monogamy? Are we really so brainwashed, and so cowered, that we cannot imagine a better way of living?" The divorce rate is at fifty percent. Very little preparation is made for marriage. A person has to have four years of training to receive a plumber's license, but absolutely no training is required for a marriage license.

Many men need to read the "trouble-shooting" instructions in the ultimate marriage manual - the Bible. The apostle Paul has much to say about marriage in his letters. In Ephesians 5 he set a very high standard for husbands. They are to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church." It is easy to say to your wife, "I love you." Your wife needs to be loved. But loved how? The Perfect Husband and ultimate lover is Christ as seen in His relationship to his bride the church. Obviously no sinful human being has the capacity to love with the divine fullness and perfection with which Christ loved. Loving is a matter of choice and an act of the heart and the will.

A Christ-like Husband Will Have...

▶ **A Submissive Love**

If you're a husband who thinks the wife's duty is to submit carte blanche to you because you're the husband and God said so, it's time to step back and look at what He first demands of you: "*husbands, love your wives,...*" (5:25a). Utter submission to the will of God is for the husband to submit to this command and love his wife like Christ loved the church. The husband's duty in marriage is to submit to Christ and love her. The root of most marital problems is sin, and the root of all sin is selfishness. Submission to Christ and to one another is the only way to overcome selfishness, "You just don't know how bad my wife is! I'm miserable. That woman fights me and belittles everything I try to do. I'm sorry, but I don't want to love her —I want to leave her!" Think about it! Which came first, the church's submission to Christ or Christ's loving service and sacrifice of Himself for the church? Obviously it is the later. So husbands, love your wives in the prescribed manner and she most likely will choose to submit.

▶ **A Sacrificial Love**

The manner in which a man is to love his wife is "...just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..." (5:25b). Christ love was sacrificial. The Greek term from "gave" is paradidomi. According to Strong's Dictionary it means "to surrender, i.e. yield up." The greatest example of Christ's love for his church, that he "gave himself up for it" by being crucified on the cross. Jesus understood how difficult it is to sacrifice for His bride. In a garden just before being betrayed He prayed to God times, asking, begging, crying, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me" (see Matthew 26:39f).

Have you heard someone trying to explain why a man cannot find a woman to marry. They will say, "the reason he kept breaking up with all those women was because he did not want to make the sacrifices that marriage demanded." A man must sacrifice his self-centered focus when he marries a woman. Many men get married thinking nothing will change. They can continue with all the same activities they did before they were married. However marriage takes sacrificing of one's time and exerting effort..

What is the hardest thing for a person to give to another? It is themselves. Jesus did not just donate blood to the church. He did not just give advice or provisions. He gave His whole self. Your wife is sick – you will need to sacrifice yourself for her by taking care of the kids, dinner, laundry and all the other things she does, in addition to caring for her physical needs. Yet this seems so paltry in comparison to what Christ was willing to give in love for His bride.

Ironic that marriage takes place at an altar. Sacrifices take place on altars. When a man and woman stand at the marriage altar and say "I do" they are really saying "I don't" as in "I don't exist anymore". Marriage is death to the old single self.

Look at Jacob's love for Rachel. He was willing to sacrifice fourteen years of his life working for his father-in-law to have her as his wife. A husband will love his wife sacrificially when her happiness and well-being are more important to you than your own. True Christian love "seeks not its own" (1 Cor. 13:5). When things go wrong in the relationship a loving husband will not seek blame but in patient loving service and dying self seek a loving solution. Dr. Ed Wheat, marriage counselor and author, wrote: "It might not be your fault, but that does not matter. It is always your responsibility."

▶ **A Sanctifying Love**

The purpose of Christ giving Himself of the church is that "*that He might sanctify...*" (5:26a) her. According to Strong "sanctify" means "to make holy, i.e. (ceremonially) purify or consecrate; (mentally) to venerate: - hallow, be holy, sanctify." It is akin to the term "holy" which means "to set apart. In the marriage ceremony, the husband is set apart to belong to the wife, and the wife is set apart to belong to the husband. The wife has a holy or sanctified place in the heart of the husband. He is set apart from his work, his hobbies, his family and friends. He has made her special just as the church is holy in relationship to Christ.

▶ **A Sanitizing Love**

Jesus died to make His bride holy "...and cleanse her..." (5:26b). The Greek word *katharizo* is translated here, "cleanse." The English word "cathartic" is derived from it. Before an ancient Greek bride's wedding she would go down to a river or pond and take a ceremonial bath to cleanse away her past life. Afterward she would don her stain-free wedding dress to await her groom. Some view this cleansing here in verse twenty-six as a mention of baptism which washes away the sin before one is added to the church or bride of Christ, Today, all congregations have their spots and wrinkles. Christ still seeks to sanitize the church which exists and functions in an impure and contaminating world.

A Christ-like husband will strive to keep his wife protected from living in Sodom USA with its wicked environment. He will not encourage her to be like the women of the world in her talk, walk or dress. He will not treat her as did Persian King Ahasuerus who demanded his wife Vashti to expose her beauty to a bunch drunk men who had been engaged in a seven day drinking feast (Esther 1).

▶ **A Singing Love**

The church is filled with filthy sinners who had to be made clean and without glory were made glorious. Jesus is able to glorify or sing the praises of His bride. What Christ has done is so "*He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish*" (5:27). Love is always doing the best for the object of one's love whether

they deserve it or not. The Good Samaritan's expression of love to the man who was beaten and robbed was based on his own generous character and on that man's severe need. Whether the man deserved his care did not enter into the picture.

Today, husbands need to glorify or sing praises of his wife. When God first brought Eve to Adam he spontaneously burst into the first love poem or song: *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man"* (Gen. 2:23). Peter said, *"husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered"* (1 Peter 3:7). The term *"honor"* primarily denotes an estimate given to a valuable treasure proclaiming its worth. Husbands, do you regard your wife as your treasure? If you want to be married to a princess, treat your wife like one. Communicate to her that she is important, and what is important to her is important to you. A husband is to be considerate of his wife. A husband is to be chivalrous to his wife as *"a weaker vessel"*. Husbands are to honor their wives *"as a fellow heir of the grace of life."* Your wife has an equal status before God and an equal reward to anticipate. Your roles are different, but you are spiritual equals. So husbands, honor her as Christ did who died for both her and your soul.

▶ **A Self-Love**

Narcissus was a character in Greek mythology who was a very handsome youth. One day he happened upon a pond which reflected back to him his face. He fell in love with his own reflection. He became so love stuck with himself that he focused on his reflection to the exclusion of every thing and everyone else. He did not even leave the pond long enough to eat. So he soon wasted away and died. Where his body lay grew a beautiful flower which bears his name - Narcissus.

The Golden Rule of marriage is *"so husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself"* (Eph. 5:28). This is not to say a husband is to have a narcissistic personality disorder. This would be a kind of love which would be self-defeating in having a good marriage relationship. Mayo Clinic defines a narcissistic personality as *"one of several types of personality disorders — is a mental condition in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance, a deep need for excessive attention and admiration, troubled relationships, and a lack of empathy for others. But behind this mask of extreme confidence lies a fragile self-esteem that's vulnerable to the slightest criticism."*

Husbands, when you fail to love your wife as your own body, you fail to love yourself. Just as you cleanse, protect, and pamper your body, do the same for her body and soul. The husband who loves his wife as Christ loves the church will no more do anything to harm her than he would to harm his own flesh. As Christ is one with His church, husbands are one with their wives. Therefore when a husband harms his wife he harms himself. A husband who violates his marriage violates himself. A husband who destroys his marriage destroys a part of himself. Husbands communicate with themselves all the time. They should thus communicate with their wives. His love must be selfless not selfish. A husband's closest neighbor is his wife. And Jesus said, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (Mark 12:31).

▶ **A Serving Love**

Paul goes on and explains why a husband is to love his wife like he loves himself, *"for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes..."* (5:29a). A husband would never starve himself so we will not starve his wife of due attention. According to A. T. Robertson's Word Pictures the term *"nourish"* means *"to nourish up to maturity and on."* The Greek word used here is found no where else except in Ephesians 6:4 where fathers are commanded to nourish their children in the Lord.

Nourishing others requires serving them. Jesus came to serve and love and not to be served. *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"* Mark 10:45; see Matt. 20:26-28; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:35-45; Philippians 2:7). Jesus focused his mission on man's greatest needs. A husband must focus on the needs of his wife. Not her wants, but what she really needs. To give that which helps her grow and mature in favor with God and man. This may require a certain level of sensitivity to her feelings, moods, and even her nonverbal communication. Jesus showed us how to serve even to the point of washing one another's feet. A dripping faucet may mean nothing to the husband, but it may be a constant irritation to the wife suffering from this form of

water torture and in need of his domestic heroism.

▶ **A Solicitous Love**

According to the Cambridge Dictionary the term “solicitous” means “showing care and helpful attention to someone...eager to help”. This is also the kind of love a husband needs to express to his wife. Just as the Lord “cherishes” the church (5:29), so the husband is to cherish his wife. The Greek term for cherish is *thalpei*. It means “to warm...to foster with tender care” (A. T. Robertson's Word Pictures). To cherish her is to use tender love and physical affection to give her warmth, comfort, protection, and security. Cherish also means to hold dear, to treat with affection.

As Christ is attentive to the church, so husbands must be with their wives. A husband might not be cherishing his wife if she complains: “you seems to resent having to spend money on me” or “I feel you would rather be at work than home with me.” The opposite of cherishing is to ignore one’s wife. But what has the wife done to merit this treatment. Husbands need to remember how much worse he has treated his God and God still cherishes him.

In the Song of Solomon the shulamite girl was dark skinned from working in the vineyards. She felt inferior to the more elegant lighter toned women of position. So the shepherd lovingly built up her self-esteem by praising her as “altogether lovely.”

▶ **A Steadfast Love**

Winston Churchill once asked the questions, “if you could not be who you are, who would you like to be?” He replied, “If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be”...Lady Churchill’s second husband.” The Prime Minister of England expressed a steadfast love for his wife.

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 as another reason why a husband should love his wife as Christ loved the church. “*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife...*” (5:31a), “To be joined” or in other translation “cleave” is translated from the Greek word *proskollao* meaning “to be glued or cemented together.” One thing the Church can count on is the fidelity of the bridegroom. Just as Christ does not carelessly separate Himself from believers, husbands and wives are not to carelessly or frivolously divorce their partners. In fact, the only other way for a marriage to end other than death is divorce on the grounds of adultery. Divorce can only be the result of a terrible crime against the oneness of marriage (Matt. 19:4f). This is why God always says, “*I hate divorce*” (Mal. 2:16). In fact, the term “divorce” should never even be brought up by a couple unless there is genuine proof of adultery.

This steadfast love is to continue to grow. However some spouses cannot leave father or mother and this greatly hinders the ability of the couple to form a loving relationship.

▶ **A Sexual Love**

The Greeks had four terms for love in their language. The term used in this context is *agape* for selfless love which is rarely used in ancient Greek literature, yet found abundantly on the pages of the New Testament. Brotherly love or friendship is expressed by the term *phileo* and the word *storge* is the natural affection shown in loving family members. The Bible does not use the term *eros* which was romantic or sexual love.

Although *eros* is not used in the New Testament the concept of sexual or romantic love is found in this passage and other. Continuing to quote from Genesis 2 Paul writes, “*...and the two shall become one flesh*” (5:31b). This refers to sexual union between a husband and wife. Paul clearly identifies this meaning in 1 Corinthians 6:16: “*or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’*”

This sexual love is not optional. Spouses are not to defraud each other. “*Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control*” (1 Cor. 7:3-5). There have been attempts by some through the years to undermine the importance of sexual love in marriage. But the love expressed in the intimate romance between the husband and wife is so important that the only place where it can take place is

within marriage between and husband and wife and the only time divorce is approved is when sex is found with someone else outside of marriage (1 Cor. 7:2; Heb. 13:4; Matt. 5:32,33).

Husbands, do you love you wife like Christ loved the church? A man who was afraid that he loved his wife too much was asked if he loved her as much a Christ loved the church. When he answered no, he was told, "Then you must love her more." If your wife can't see Christ's love in your life, it's time to get with the program. Do these things and I bet your wife would follow you anywhere and trust you with anything.

Questions:

1. How did the ancient men view marriage and wives?
2. True False Loving is a spouse is a matter emotions and not matter of choice and an act of the heart and the will.
3. Explain why a husband is to have a submissive love.
4. How did Jesus demonstrate sacrificial love?
5. How does a husband show sanctifying love toward his wife?
6. How can a husband "*cleanse*" his wife in love?
7. Who was the first husband to sing praise of his wife? What were these praises?
8. How is a husband's love of self helpful in loving his wife?
9. What is "*solicitous*" love?

10. True False A husband must focus on the needs of his wife not her just wants.
11. In what ways could a husband display his steadfast love for his wife?

12. What are some commandments in relationship to sexual love in marriage?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some ways a husband could demonstrate sacrificial love?

2. Compare how the church response to Christ love to how wives should respond to their husband's Christ-like love.

Homework: Evaluate you love toward others whether it be a spouse, children or fellow saint to see if it is Christ-like.

Fathers Raise Your Children

I always know then Father's Day is coming. One of my children will come and ask what size cologne I wear. Last year, all I asked for was breakfast in bed. The next morning I awoke on a cot in the Wendy's drive-thru. Fathers can always count on at least one thing on this annual paternal celebration - bills from Mother's Day. The thing that scares me most about Father's Day is that my wife will get me something I cannot afford. With any luck I will end up with a tie or one of those singing fish. Yet what kind of day your are is more important than what kind of Father's Day gift you will receive.

Bad Dad/Good Dad

The Old Testament scriptures are filled with illustrations of fathers who were leaders and were failures. The failure of these fathers often resulted in the loss of leadership or their failure to lead the next generation in the way of God. The fathers of Israel were commanded to follow the Law of Moses and *"teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up"* (Deut. 6:7). After Moses' death Israel followed God's Word faithfully throughout the time of Joshua and even taught them to the next generation. However, *"when all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths"* (Judges 2:10-13). All it took for Israel to reject the Lord was for one generation of fathers to fail in passing their faith off to their children.

God sent foreign nations against Israel to punish them. When they repented he raised up a leader (a judge) to save them. Eli judged Israel for forty years with the help of his two sons. His sons *"were corrupt; they did not know the Lord...Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord"* (1 Sam. 2:12,17). Eli knew how corrupt his grown sons had become and did not stop them. *"Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting"* (1 Sam. 2:22). It is for this reason that God rejected Eli and his household. *"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them"* (1 Sam. 3:13)

After the death of Eli and his sons, Samuel became the final judge of Israel. He also had two sons who were corrupt. For this reason the people of Israel rejected them and Samuel as judge and called for a king. *"But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations"* (1 Sam. 8:3-5). Israel sinned in rejecting God and asking for a king. However, Samuel's sons and his fatherhood played a role in this tragedy.

After God rejected the first anointed King of Israel, He sent Samuel to anointed David as the next king. David was a man after God's own heart, but he too failed to rule his own house well. Trouble came as a result. *"Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king'; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. (And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, 'Why have you done so?'"* (1 Kings 1:5,6). David's failure as a father did not just negatively affect him and his immediate family. All of Israel was to suffer for David's poor leadership with regard to his grown sons.

One of David's descendants was King Manasseh. He was a very wicked King of Judah. However, toward the end of his reign he repented and turned to God. Was this humble penitence enough to influence the leadership of his son, Amon? *"Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done; for Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and served them. And he did not humble himself before the Lord, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more"* (2 Chron. 33:21-23). Fathers cannot always undo their failures of the past.

Although some of these men were effective leaders to some extent, all of them were pointed out in God's Word for their failure as fathers. Many times, their parental irresponsibility was in relationship to their grown children, not just those still under their roof. Jeffery Dahmer who kidnaped, raped, killed and ate his many victims had a father, Lionel Dalmer. He wrote a book saying, "I have come to believe that some of the compulsions that overwhelmed my son may have had their origins in me."

Some fathers are irreligious and never teach their children to worship God. Some fathers are slaves to alcohol. Some fathers are unloving and apathetic. Some fathers love money more than their children. Some fathers are more concerned about football and hunting. Some fathers turn a blind eye to sin. Yet, some fathers will train up their children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6).

Who were good examples of fatherhood in the Bible? What made them good fathers? What are some things fathers should do to demonstrate that they rule their household well?

First, good fathers will search for God's Will concerning how they should raise their children. When an angel told Manoah's barren wife that she would have a child, Manoah wanted to meet with the angel and know exactly how God wanted the boy to be raised. "Then Manoah prayed to the Lord, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born" (Judges 13:8). Would it not be great if all fathers were like Manoah?

Second, good fathers chose to serve the Lord. Just before his death, Joshua gathered the children of Israel and gave them a challenge. *"And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"* (Josh. 24:15). Serving the Lord with your family cannot be accomplished without worshiping God. Judge Tatum, a Juvenile Court in Nashville, Tenn., wrote, "I have tried approximately eight thousand boys and girls under the age of seventeen for violating the law, and of that number there has not been a child in the court whose father and or mother went to Sunday school and or church regularly."

Job demonstrates the need of fathers who will pray for their children and constantly be concerned with their relationship to God. He was concerned that *"it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did regularly"* (Job. 1:5). How often are fathers worried about sin in the lives of their children? They are anxious about their education, having enough friends and money, being able to drive a safe car, etc. Few fathers are responsible enough to even pray for the souls of their sons and daughters.

Nearly two thousand years ago Paul spoke of the need for godly fathers who would step up and fulfill their duties to their children. Genuine fathers that follow Paul's instructions in Ephesians 6:4 are becoming an endangered species. *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonishing of the Lord."*

Parenting is hard work. It is easier to raise turn-ups, squash, lettuce, etc. than children. But if we as parents today would turn-up for worship, squash our self-centeredness, and let us lovingly discipline we will be able to raise a bumper crop of god-fearing children.

The context involves the submission of everyone to one another in their various roles: *"submitting to one another in the fear of God"* (Eph. 5:21). Wives and husbands submit to each other as Christ in their mutually compatible roles. Children are to obey and honor their parents. Fathers must submit to their role of parenting.

Recipients of this Command: “fathers”

Is this command given to fathers specifically or parents in general? The same term is used for both of Moses’ parents in Hebrews 11:23. In Jewish families, the fathers were responsible for the education of the children. Special emphasis upon the father’s rule of spiritual leadership as the head of the family unit. Although this passage mentions it is the father who takes the lead, the command applies to both parents in general.

After the Supreme Court ruled against school prayer a cartoon came out in the Washington Post: “What do they expect us to do - listen to the kids pray at home?” When it comes to school parents have become lazy and expect the teachers to raise their children. Furthermore God did not tell the church to train up or parent the children of the members. Fathers, stop passing the buck to teachers, elders, deacons, preacher, teachers, members, etc. Bible classes are to aid parents in teaching them about the Lord and His Word. The primary duty is on the shoulders of the fathers. Bible Classes are an expediency. However, too many parents in this world have left the training of their children to TV, movies, internet, and the child’s peer group.

Restriction: “do not provoke your children to wrath”

Parenting comes with a restriction or warning for fathers not to “*provoke*.” This term means to “goad your children to resentment” (NEB). Parents can easily misuse their authority and discipline to manipulate, exploit and crush the very spirit of their children. Provoking is the opposite of encouraging the children.

This provoking by some fathers pushes the child to the point of having an attitude of “wrath.” It means to exasperate or to enrage. This will happen time to time in the child parent relationship. However, the tense of the verb implies the father is continually goading their child to the point of enraging them. The noun form is used of “*anger*” in Ephesians 4:26. This is not to say that a father must permit a child to do wrong for fear of arousing its anger.

Just how can a parent provoke a child to wrath? By pampering and indulging their child they can over-indulge them. This may cause a sense of entitlement. Other fathers neglect their child with making little personal sacrifice of their limited time. Other fathers leave their family causing abandonment issues and making the child feel unwanted. Fathers need to care more about their off-spring than their golf swing. Foster homes are filled today with children due to divorce or simple disinterest of parents. Children are a blessings not a burden. “*Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward*” (Ps. 127:3). King David’s great sins and neglect at being a father drove Absalom to rebellion, treason, and attempted patricide (2 Sam. 14, 15).

In a list titled *Ten Simple Rules for Dating My Daughter* rule number one was, “if you pull into my driveway and honk, you’d better be delivering a package, because you’re sure not picking anything up.” Some father’s are so over-protective and domineering the provoke their children to wrath. Excessive involvement results in helicopter parents who hover over their children and a smother instead of mother.

On the other hand some parents are overly cruel in their discipline. The verbal abuse by sarcasm and constant ridicule damage the child emotionally. Some punishments are so cruel and harsh they result in physical abuse. Others are just overly strict to the point they can never let the child learn via their mistakes. One son complained, “my father would use a nuclear warhead to kill a mosquito.”

The opposite situation of failing to discipline a child can be equally damaging. Parents who care enough to correct a child are seen by the child as caring. Often discipline only amounts to empty threats like the promise of a spanking if they “do that one more time.” Inconsistent discipline tells the child they can either be blamed for everything or get away with murder.

Some parents are perfectionist with overly high expectations and others have very low expectations for their child. They may try to live their life vicariously through their children pushing them in areas of athletics, academics or social achievements. One young lady was pushed to be head cheerleader, homecoming queen, and later a model. After a complete mental collapse she took her life and later at the hospital a note was found on her lifeless body, “I don’t care what it is I do, it never satisfies my mother.”

Martin Luther once wrote, “spare the rod and spoil the child - that is true. But beside the rod keep an apple to give him when he has done well.” Parents are too heavy on the rebuking and too light on the encouraging. Instead of fault-finding they need to try to catch their children doing right and compliment them. Parents become the enemy by acting like one who never offers up words of encouragement.

The Bible is filled with poor parenting which resulted from favoritism or showing partiality among their children. Isaac favored Esau over Jacob and Rebekah preferred Jacob over Esau. Jacob showed favoritism to Joseph. For parents to compare their children with each other, especially in the children’s presence, can be devastating to the child who is less talented or favored. Remember, children might not be equally talented. Some are mechanically oriented while others are book-oriented from the start.

Responsibilities to Children

Next, Paul introduces two responsibilities for fathers with the word “instead” It shows a contrast between the duties of nurturing, training, and admonishing with the aforementioned restriction of provoking. The term “*nurture*” which is translated “bring them up” has to do with the idea of feeding someone something nourishing. The term is used in Greek of midwives who rub the gums of infants to simulate them to nurse. In means to “rear them tenderly” (Hendricksen 262).

Thayer defines “*nurture*” to mean “the whole training and education of children which [involves]...the cultivation of mind and morals...commands and admonitions...reproof and punishment...correcting mistakes and curbing the passions... the increase of virtue.” Compare this to Jesus who “*increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*” (Luke 2:52).

“A divorced father who is forbidden to share his religious beliefs with his children has appealed to the case of the U.S. Supreme Court. According to a Wisconsin court ruling, Robert Lange can visit his children only in the presence of a third party to ensure that he does not mention his faith. Lange’s ex-wife does not agree with his Christian beliefs” (National & International Religion Report, 12/13/93).

However, a good father will teach his faith to his children. God said of Abraham, “*For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him*” (Gen. 18:19). This does not mean fathers can pass this duty off to the mothers or to the local church. He is to bring them up in the Lord, not TV, movies and comic books. He is not to bring them up just on basketball, baseball, football and track. He is to teach them more than just fishing, hunting, camping, hiking and swimming.

The second responsibility of a father is to provide the child with training. This comes from the Greek term *paideia*. It is used in Hebrews 12:5-11 of discipline or chastening. This is the corrective teaching via forms of punishment that a father must use to correct the child’s bad behavior.

Although spanking is not the politically correct method of parenting today. God’s wisdom has promoted it for thousands of years. “*He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly*” (Prov. 13:24), “*Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction*” (Prov. 19:18). “*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him*” (Prov. 22:15). This definitely involves a good old fashion paddle. A spanking can remove a lot of foolishness. A spanking will not only remove the bad it will bless the father in return. “*Correct your son, and he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul*” (Prov. 29:17). In the past when children failed to go to bed when they were told, Dad would holler up, “Don’t make me come up there! Now go to bed and go to sleep!” The last thing in the world we wanted to hear was his footsteps up the stairs. We all knew the if he made the flight up the stairs someone was going to have to pay for his round trip.

The final duty of dads to their children is to provide instruction by admonishing them. The Greek term *nouthesia* means to “place before the mind.” It implies a verbal warning or a compliment encouraging good behavior. A son or daughter will do well to heed the admonitions of their fathers. “*A fool despises his father’s instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent*” (Proverbs 15:5 ESV).

Parents, ask yourselves: What do you put before their minds? What pictures do you have on the

walls? What books do you have on the bookshelf? What magazines do you subscribe to? What television programs do you watch? What music do you listen to? Do you admonish them of the dangers in these?

Realm: "in the Lord"

The origin of authority in the role of parenting is in relationship to the Lord. It is spiritual, not television, football, scouts, hunting, science, etc. Neither is the parent to rear the child after his own ideas and notions. Our goal is not merely to get our kids to outwardly conform to a list of rules. It is the indoctrination of the child. Where the parents put the Lord's doctrine in the heart and mind of their children. The end result would be like that expressed by the apostle John, "*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth*" (3 John 4).

A father's most important reason for living is to transfer the baton - the gospel into the hands of his children. As point man or forerunner or coach of his team dads must pass on their faith to the extent that it becomes the faith of their child. This is not by force but resulting in the free will acceptance of the teaching and discipline of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Charles Francis Adams, the 19th century political figure and diplomat, kept a diary. One day he entered: "Went fishing with my son today--a day wasted." His son, Brook Adams, also kept a diary, which is still in existence. On that same day, Brook Adams made this entry: "Went fishing with my father--the most wonderful day of my life!" (Silas Shotwell, Sept, 1987). No father is wasting his time with his children.

Questions:

1. What happened to the generation that follow Joshua and the elders of his day?
2. Why was the high priest Eli and his sons rejected by God?
3. What problem did the Israelites point out in regard to Samuel when they demanded a king?
4. How did David react to Adonijah's rebellious heart?
5. Was King Manasseh's humble penitence enough to influence the leadership of his son, Amon? Explain.
6. What made Manoah a good father before Samson was even born?

7. What great decision did Joshua make for his family?
8. Why did Job do that made him a great example of fatherhood?
9. Who is commanded to raise their children?
10. What does "*provoke*" mean?
11. In what ways can fathers be guilty of provoking their children to wrath?
12. How can a father's favoritism destroy his fatherly influence?
13. Define "*nurture*" as it applies to fathers.
14. What is involved in a father training his children?
15. What is the realm of a father authority to raise his children?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some ways a father can provoke his children to love the Lord?

2. What are some examples a father needs to set before his children?

Homework: Encourage fathers around you to redeem the little time they have to raise their children.

Blessedness of Motherhood

How many of you have mothers? Should be most of you. Motherhood is not just a very common job but hard work. Let's face the facts, if being a mother was easy us Dad's would do it. What makes a mother's job hard is that she is handicapped. Mothers only have two hands. At least mother's prove that evolution is not true, if it were true mothers would have developed that third hand by now.

Mothers find it hard to find some "me" time. If they want to get their family's attention all they have to do is sit down and look comfortable. To a mother silence is not golden - it is suspicious. All a mother wants is an hour alone in the bathroom. All she got was a macaroni necklace and had to lock the bathroom door for an hour and eat the necklace when she got hungry. Good mothers deserve to be appreciated.

It takes a big man to be known openly as a "mama's boy." However, several of our presidents were openly and unashamedly "mama's boys." George Washington said, "All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her. The greatest teacher I ever had was my mother." Later our sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln said: "all that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother." President McKinley provided in his will that, first of all, his mother should be made comfortable for life. Garfield's first act, after being inaugurated President of the U.S., was to stoop and kiss his aged mother, who sat near him. On May 9, 1914, by an act of Congress, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. He established the day as a time for "public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country."

Just giving birth do a baby does not automatically make a woman a great mother. After all, I knew a man who bought himself a grand piano. This did not make him a great musician. He did not know how to play it. But it was just another piece of furniture for his wife to dust. What does it take to make a mother worthy of honor?

- **Childbearing**

The apostles Paul's comments about the role of women in the church and spiritual life has caused some to label and libel him as chauvinistic. In the second chapter of First Timothy he wrote that women are not to function in a public way in the assemblies of the church, such as leading prayer where men are present (2:8), not to teach over men (2:12), but to learn in silence with all subjection (2:11). Just what is a woman to do? Paul said, "*nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control*" (1 Timothy 2:15). Giving birth is not a act by which a woman meets the condition for salvation, like believing Jesus to be the Son of God. Childbearing is the role God has given to the woman. As she faithfully fulfills this role, God will bless her with salvation.

- **Household Manager**

Next in 1 Timothy 5:14 Paul discusses the main realm of a mother's labor. "*Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.*" My wife Beverley declined the label "house wife" explaining that she is a wife, but she is not married to a house but to her husband. Perhaps the best view of her role in the realm of the home is explained by the phrase "manage the house." A mother is to be the household manager.

Post modernists reject this role for a woman. They claim that this does not permit the woman to be equal with a man or allow her to be her own person and find herself. However, God is the one who made man and woman. He gave them their roles. He loves them equally. And he knows what role for which they are best suited.

However, it is true that many modern conveniences have made it possible for mothers to have

more free time. This free time does not mean she has to be bored. To the contrary most mother's do not have time to be bored. Mothers are busy thawing hamburger, washing mounds of laundry; ironing; folding; cleaning; shopping; cooking; worming the dog, car pooling; being a referee, a couch, an encourager, a counselor, a cop; Yet they do all this while making every effort at remaining tactful, lovable, compassionate, cheerful, responsible, balanced, and sane.

- **Discipline the Children**

Young children must learn to behave and obey. This does not come natural to most children. Respect for authority begins in the home. "The little three-year old said to her father, "The dog says 'bow wow', the kitty says 'meow meow', the little lamb says 'baa baa' and mama says 'no no'." (Pulpit Helps Sept. 1982, p. 17).

The mother who indulges a defiant and rebellious child invites misery and heartaches. A child left to himself will bring shame. *"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother"* (Proverbs 29:15). Undisciplined children despise their mother. *"There is a generation that curses its father, and does not bless its mother...The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it"* (Proverbs 30:11,17). Ouch!

- **Provide Spiritual Guidance**

A mother's early influence upon the mind of a small child is irreplaceable. Day Care workers are not enough, public school teachers are not allowed to provide spiritual guidance, and even Sunday school teachers have not been given the commandment to take over this role. An ancient Spanish proverb states, "An ounce of the mother is worth a pound of the clergy."

The apostle Paul praised the role Timothy's mother and grandmother played in the young man's spiritual up-bring. *"When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also"* (2 Tim. 1:5). *"But as for you, continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (3:14,15). So parents need to start early. In fact the word "childhood" there in verse fifteen is literally, "infancy." Children are being introduced to academics earlier and earlier. So why not begin to teach them to walk and talk like Christ from infancy.

In Deuteronomy six Jewish parents were told to *"teach these things diligently to your sons and daughters when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up..."* Timothy would have heard the stories of the great faith of men like Moses and Abraham, the fall of the walls of Jericho, David's victory over Goliath, Daniel in the den of lions. Just as the Canaanite mother sought out Jesus on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter (Matt. 15:22), so mothers need to seek out Christ or lead the children to Him (Ac. 16:15; Mk. 10:13-15).

Two mothers in the Old Testament provide a contrast in parenting. Whereas only eighteen mothers are mentioned in the New Testament more than a hundred are referred to in the Old. The very wicked queen of Judah, Athaliah, proved to be the worst example of a mother. *"Ahaziah was forty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother advised him to do wickedly"* (2 Chronicles 22;2,3). In contrast Abijah was the wife of Ahaz who was a very wicked king of Judah. King Ahaz was idolatrous, offered human sacrifices, and even destroyed the worship of God in the Temple (2 Chron. 28:1-4; 21-27). Abijah was also the mother of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:1,2). She named their son "Hezekiah" which means "strong in Jehovah". Hezekiah *"was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him"* (2 Kings 18:2-5). Hezekiah's mother is to credit for his godly reign.

- **Demonstrate a Genuine Faith in Our Life**

Paul told Timothy it brought him great joy *“when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also”* (2 Tim. 1:5). The term used here for “genuine” is translated from the Greek term from which the word “hypocritical”. It literally means “without a mask” or un-hypocritical, undisguised, unfeigned or sincere. The faith of Lois, Eunice and then Timothy was not a mere costume or Sunday clothes they just put on to pretend to be a Christian. Their faith was the same seven days a week and where ever they went. They exemplified for Timothy a genuine faithful life for him to imitate.

Four preachers were arguing over Bible translations. One said he preferred the King James Version because of its beauty, eloquent old English. Another said he preferred the American Standard Bible for its literalism, the way it moves the reader from passage to passage with confident feelings of accuracy from the original text. A third man preferred Moffatt because of its quaint, penetrating use of words, the turn of a phrase that captures the attention of the reader. After giving the issue further thought, the fourth scholar admitted, 'I have personally preferred my mother's translation.' When the other scholars chuckled and asked, "Your mother translated the Bible? He responded, "Yes, she translated it. She translated each page of the Bible into her own life. It is the most convincing translation I ever saw.'

Paul was confident that before he ever met and began to work with Timothy that Lois and Eunice had already laid a firm foundation. However, Timothy did not just inherit their faith. His faith was his very own. Remember “God has no grandchildren.”

William Frederick Dunkle Jr. has pointed out “that of the 69 kings of France only three were really loved by their subjects and that these were the only ones reared by their mothers instead of by tutors or guardians.” Mothers and fathers it is not the job of the preachers, elders, deacons or Bible class teachers to raise up your children in the faith. You must instill a genuine faith in your children.

- **Protect Children While Trusting God**

Jochebed was Moses’ biological mother. Pharaoh orders *“every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive”* (Ex. 1:22). Whether or not God gave Jochebed the plan to put Moses in the ark and hide him along the banks of the Nile, this student of the Bible cannot say for sure. Nonetheless, one can only image this was one of the darkest days in the life of Jochebed. When caught between the death treats of a hostile king and spare the life of her son she made the only real choice: trust in God.

The pitch-lined ark turned out to be a cradle of safety for baby Moses. Ironically the crocodile-infested Nile was safer than the arms of Moses mother. Pharaoh wanted all male babies put in the river. So she complied. But chose a safe location and stationed her daughter to watch what happened. At this time Moses’ sister, Miriam was about ten years of age and his brother, Aaron, would have been about three.

Part of trusting in God is waiting on God to act. Think about poor Jochebed waiting at home hoping to here good news from Miriam. How relieved she must have been when none other than Pharaoh’s daughter came and rescued her son. Her trust in God gave her back he baby. She was able to raise him for the first couple of years in her home before giving him over to Pharaoh’s daughter.

Conclusion

Many mothers let negative propaganda get to them - and begin to entertain feelings of discontent with motherhood. However, a Ladies Home Journal - Roper poll "Asked to name the best thing about being a woman, 60% of those surveyed answered motherhood" Little girls still want to be a mommy when they grow up. Motherhood is a great privilege. There is no vocation, for which women may aspire, that is worthy to be compared with than that of being a good mother. As a poet said it so well when he wrote: "The hand that rocks the cradle, Is the hand that rules the world." For those wives and mother’s who faithfully fulfill their God-given role *“her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her”* (Proverbs 31:28).

Questions:

1. Why do you think so many of our presidents were "mama's boys"?
2. What is the benefit according to Paul for women to bear children?
3. What does it mean to "*manage the house*"?
4. What benefits does Proverbs say come to mothers with well disciplined children?
5. What did Lois and Eunice provide Timothy?
6. Contrast Athaliah with Abijah?
7. What type of faith did Lois and Eunice emulate for Timothy?
8. How did Jochebed protect Moses?

Application & Discussion:

1. What sort of things are involved in management of a household?
2. What are some areas where mothers need to give their children protection?

Homework: Make a list of all the good mothers mentioned in the Bible and explain why they are on the list.

Duties of Christian Parents

There is perhaps nothing more frightening to a parent than a child that has gone missing. Yet, many times it is the parents who are missing from the lives of their children. Father's work late and come home to a house where the children are asleep and the only time they see him is when it is time to play. The absent father has emerged. Mom is gone. She is seeking a career.

Four hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the Athenian philosopher, Socrates, agonized for the children of Athens: "Could I climb the highest place in Athens, I would lift my voice and proclaim: 'Fellow citizens, why do ye turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth and take so little care of your children to whom one day you must relinquish it all.'" Yet for all his concern this brilliant Greek had little understanding of his own responsibility. In his search for "wisdom" he largely abandoned his children and his wife, Xanthippe, to their own devices.

Fatherhood and motherhood are two responsibilities which cannot be delegated. Teachers at school, government workers, elders, deacons, preachers, etc., can't substitute for fatherhood. More often than not, his time is dedicated to his business, his recreation, and only to those things that interest him. Some men in our generation amass fortunes and seek to buy the love of their children. Such children may develop drug habits and life styles that even the parent's big bank account cannot handle. How easy it is to let things you buy for your family take the place of giving yourself.

We will have our children at home approximately 18-20 years. If you don't take the time now you will regret it later. "Clifton Barber of Colorado State says that while women seemed to prepare for the empty-nest syndrome and quickly got over their initial grief, men showed deep regret at not having spent more time with their children when they were younger. 'The men felt they had blown an opportunity forever,' says Barber, 'and during our interviews, several broke down and began to cry.'"

Working mothers has been a problem in this country. This situation is not without consequences. Children are being raised by others. Children imitate the values and manners of the caretakers who actually raised them and not the values of mom and dad. What kind of values are your children going to have. One of the greatest jobs any woman could have is to guide the home. *"Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully"* (1 Tim. 5:14). I don't believe you can prove from the Bible that a married woman absolutely cannot work outside the home. After all, it doesn't say "keep her at home". The "worthy woman" of Proverbs 31 did a fair amount of trade and work outside the home and was praised for it. She is the Queen of the Family - the ruler of the house and manager of daily family affairs

The joys of the motherhood can and should never be under estimated. Although her work is difficult and often thankless, the rewards are matchless. Someone has said that back of every great man there is always a great woman. Many great men attest to the important role their mother's played in their lives. Abraham Lincoln said: "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."

What Do Children Deserve From Their Parents?

The Psalmist tells us that *"children are a heritage from the Lord"* (Ps. 127:3). A child is an immortal soul, created in the image of God, therefore they deserve the very best.

■ Prayers

Hannah prayed for a son and was blessed with Samuel. He turned out to be a man of prayer in judging Israel. Many mothers teach their little ones to pray at meal times and bed time.

Being a father is a demanding responsibility. At times fathers are in desperate need of help from

someone who understands their difficulties and can give them help and guidance. Therefore, prayer to the heavenly Father is a father's greatest help. Job was a concerned father and spiritual leader of his family. Job is a marvelous example of the prayerful father. Job said, "*Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. ' Thus Job did continually*" (1:4,5). Praying for your children is one of the wisest things a parent can do. After all, the Heavenly Father is perfect and knows best for our children. Our prayers also demonstrate that we recognize that these souls are our responsibility given by God to us.

Consider the following prayer called *A Father's Prayer*:

Dear God, My little boy of three
Has said his nightly prayer to thee;
Before his eyes were closed in sleep,
He asked that Thou his soul would keep.
And I, still kneeling at his bed,
My hand upon his tousled head.
Do ask, with deep humility,
That thou, dear Lord, remember me.
Make me, king Lord, a worthy Dad,
That I may lead this little lad
In pathways over fair and bright,
That I may keep his steps aright.
O God, his trust must never be
Destroyed or even marred by me.
So, for the simple things he prayed
With childish voice so unafraid,
I, trembling, ask the same from Thee,
Dear Lord, king Lord, remember me.

■ **Being Brought to Jesus**

Jesus does not wish for anyone to hinder the children from coming to Him. The Bible gives us this story, "*Then they brought young children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it"* (Mark 10:13-15). Since Jesus is the only way to salvation, parents need to make sure their children come to Him (John 14:8; Acts 4:12).

■ **Taken to Church**

When dealing with the wayward young people who were raised in the church, they will often try to blame their parents for their own spiritual failure. They'll say, "I learn-ed to hate church, because my parents always forced me to attend." Even if this is the case at least the parents tried. What parent is there that didn't have to encourage and exhort their teenagers on faithful attendance? In many cases forcing the child to attend pays off later in life when the parents witness the faithfulness of a grown child. On the other hand, parents who do not "force" their children to go to church, rarely enjoy the pride of rearing faithful children.

But what about forcing your children to attend? Will it drive them further from God? Isn't it wiser to let them make their own choices about attending church? The former head of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover had some wise insight into these questions:

Shall I make my child go to church? Yes; and with no further discussion about the matter. Are you startled? Why? How do you answer Junior, when he comes to breakfast on Monday morning and announces to you that he isn't going to school anymore? You know! Junior goes! You didn't

wait until you were old enough and you didn't wait until he was old enough to decide if he wished to remain dirty or clean. Do you wait until he's old enough to decide if he wants to take his medicine when he's sick? Your firmness and example will furnish a bridge over which his youthful rebellion travels into rich and satisfying experiences in personal religious living. The parents of America can strike a telling blow against the forces which contribute to our juvenile delinquency, if our mothers and father will take their children to worship our Lord regularly.

Mothers and fathers need to take care that they not only provide for their child's physical needs, but for their spiritual needs as well. Parents are responsible for the spiritual well being of the child (Eph. 6:4). The best way to instill the need to attend worship is for parents to attend with their children. It is not good enough for mothers and fathers to simply send their children to church. They should take them to church.

But what if you set a good example? What if you try your best to give them positive encouragement? What if you even force them to attend? What if after doing everything you can they still don't want to go to church? Should you just given in, let them have it their way, and hope one day they will change their minds? NO! Parents make their children eat the right kind of food for their health they do not end up hating that food. Parents make their children take medicine when sick, and they do not end up hating being well. Remember, if you let a pig and a boy have everything they want, you will get a good pig and a bad boy.

The example of attendance attracts children to Christ while non-attendance repels them. Mothers and Fathers who attend services together as a family will greatly increase the odds their children will grow up and faithfully worship God. Failure to do so may cause them to lose their soul. Contemplate the following poem: *Mary Had a Little Boy*

Mary had a little boy, his souls was white as snow.
He never went to Bible class, cause Mary would not go.
He never heard the tales of Christ that thrilled the children's minds'
While other children went to class, this child was left behind.
And so he grew from babe to youth, she saw to her dismay
A soul that once was white had turned a dingy grey
Realizing he was lost, she tried to win him back,
But now the soul that once was white had turned an ugly black.
She even started back to church and Bible study, too.
She begged the Preacher "isn't there something you can do?"
The preacher tried — failed and said, "We are just too far behind,
I tried to tell you years ago, but you would pay no mind."
And so another soul is lost, that once was white as snow.
Bible classes could have helped, but Mary wouldn't go.

Parents it is your duty not the preacher or elders, to bring your children to Christ. There is long lasting happiness for those who do. *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another"* (Heb. 10:24-25).

Attending worship and Bible studies and even Gospel Meetings demonstrates a consistent priorities to children. It is difficult to convince children that a relationship with God is the most important thing in the world when you are negligent about the work and worship of God. Inconsistent attendances gives our children a confused and distorted sense of values.

A boy brought up in church is seldom brought up in court. Judge Sam Davis Tatum: "...and since I became Judge of the juvenile Court on June 1, 1939, there have sat before me approximately 51,000 youngsters under the age of eighteen for violating the law within that section. And by their own statements, of that approximate 51,000 only 28 instances were the father and mother and children going to Sunday School and Church regularly at the time that the child became involved in trouble. And of that

approximate 51,000, by their own statements, only 154 of them were going to Sunday School and Church regularly at the time they became involved in trouble." (Words of Wisdom, 1967, p. 14). Juvenile Judge Philip Gillian of Denver said, "We have never had an active church boy in real trouble in the juvenile court." Then Judge Gillian gave this advice to parents: "Take - don't send - your children to church. Such is taking major steps in the prevention of delinquency among youth."

■ **A Good Spiritual Education**

We are raising a generation of spiritual illiterates. Kids know more about the Power Rangers than the power of God and more about Sprung Bob than the Son of God. It is quite true that there are many negative influences and stiff competition for your child's attention. Remember, Timothy lived in a wicked world (Rom. 1:28-32). His father was not a Christian nor a Jew, yet he was taught (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15-17).

In this permissive society of ours, parents are increasingly finding excuses for not guiding and disciplining their children. The spiritual well-being of their children is left up to mere chance and the whims of the child. Children need guidance in many areas of life. There is no area more important or an aspect of their lives they are more ill prepared to make sound choices than their spiritual well-being. Failure to take charge of your child's spiritual life is an evasion of your God given responsibility.

■ **An Example of Faithfulness**

What better way is there than showing them through your good example? The fact is, children, like most adults, will learn things quicker through good examples. Your example will help train them so that they will not forsaking God even when they are old, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it*" (Prov. 22:6).

A father sat in his easy chair reading his Sunday morning newspaper. suddenly he turned to his little boy and said, "now, son, put that funny paper down, and get ready for Sunday school." The little fellow said, "daddy, aren't you going with me?" "No," he said, "I'm not going with you, but I want you to hurry up and get ready." After a few minutes the little fellow said, "daddy, did you go to Sunday school when you were a little boy like me?" "I certainly did, I went every Sunday." "Well," said the little fellow, "I bet it won't do me any good, either."

So parents take your children to church to learn the stories of the Bible and about God's will for their lives. Take them to visit the sick, elderly and shut-ins, so they can develop a heart of compassion and practice pure religion (James 1:26-27). When it comes time to say good by to a lost loved one take them to a funeral, so they may gain understanding into the brevity of life. Bring them with you to clean the church building or care for the church yard, so they can learn to serve and do their part.

When we bring a child into the world we start another soul toward eternity. Parents need to carefully select those things that will help their children grow into spiritually mature adults. By merely giving them the material things that may be the best we can give we rob them of the guidance they need the most - spiritual guidance. Let every hour of every day be lived in such a manner that every word and every deed will lead some child in the right way. Your child deserves the very best you can give. Your child deserves godly parents. Your child deserves the help you can give them to help reach heaven, to dwell with God and us forever.

One thing that parents should easily find time to do for their children is to set an example of a good marriage. Children need to know that mom and dad are always going to be there for them. They need to see how much their parents love each other. They do not need to see fight and quarreling.

■ **Providing Needs**

1 Timothy 5:8 states, "*But if any provide not for his own, and especially they of his own household, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*" Children have many needs that going beyond the basics of food, shelter, and clothing. Children need love. It is important that this is both verbal and physically demonstrated with hugs. Children need your time. A father was once approached by his son and asked how much money he made per hour. The father said he made \$30.00 an hour. The boy busted open his piggy bank and was able to come up with about \$15.23. He gave to his dad and said, "I would like to buy thirty minutes of your time." There is no better way to spend time than with your children. "*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*" (Eph. 5:15,16).

On the other hand, your exhorting and example may result in the reassurance experienced by John: *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth"* (3 John 4).

Questions:

1. To whom do many parents try to delegate their parental responsibilities?
2. What problem does a career pose to parenting?
3. What did Hannah and Job pray for?
4. How can a parent bring their child to Jesus, today?
5. Instead of sending a child or forcing a child to go to church what should parents do?
6. Why is church attendance as a family so important?
7. What message does a parent's inconsistent attendance send to children?
8. How can a parent help a child develop *"pure religion"*?
9. How does God view parents who neglect the needs of their children?
10. Other than food shelter and clothing what do children need for their parents?

Application & Discussion:

1. List ways a parent can provide their children with a good spiritual education.

Homework: Meditate on how much better parents one would be if they looked to God as the role model in parenting.

Training Up Children

To train an athlete for competition or a soldier for battle takes discipline. Parents are to train their children. *"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). This too requires discipline. The term *"train"* Comes from the Hebrew term *chanak* meaning "to put into the mouth" (Pulpit Comm., p. 422). In the days before blenders and Gerber, mothers would chew up food and then give it to their babies. It could be translated "to give instruction, to imbue." Webster defines "train" as "to instruct so as to make proficient." The goal in disciplining our children when they are young is so that as they grow older that will use self-discipline to control their own behavior. The child is to become proficient to the point of independence of the parent's continued training.

Can a child be trained to behave? A news report of farmer with trained pigs. He poured slop in the trough and the pigs came running out of the barn. The farmer would say "Now Wait a minute. We have to offer thanks first." Then he took off his hat said a prayer and when he said "amen". Those pigs hit it. Don't tell me our children can't wait. We sell pigs short. Sometimes we sell children short. Surely, if pigs can be trained to wait to eat supper until thanks is offered, children can be so trained! Parents to tolerate misbehavior and defend themselves say, "my child has always had a mind of her own and I've never been able to do a thing about it." Children have a mind of their own? That is why he gave the the mature minded parents to mold their mind. They are to make them mind.

Trainers & Trainees

Obviously, parents are to be the number one trainers of their children. The grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, preacher, elders, deacons, teachers, etc. can help but the god given duty is to the parents. *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord"* (Eph. 6:4). Children are a great blessing for God. For every blessing there is a corresponding responsibility. This is a duty some fathers pass off to mothers and mothers pass it on to Day Cares and then to teachers and then the school ends up having to pass the duty off to police officers and juvenile courts.

Children need to be trained that they are under obligation to obey their parents. *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ...Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord"* (Eph. 6:1,4; Col. 3:20).

At the beginning of a marriage a husband and wife may argue about how is in charge, but after the first baby arrives the argument is mute. Why? They soon learn the seven pound bundle of joy is in charge. The fact is parents have to establish with their child that they are in charge. Parents says, "share your toys...eat your veggys...stop kicking the cat". The child will respond, "I don't want to...Why?" "I'm in charge here", parents will retort in the never ending debate. My mother told me just to try a bite of broccoli. By doing so she tricked me into loving broccoli, cauliflower, etc. Another common command to children is "Clean up your room." They response, "I don't want too. I can't find my room". God never intended for a three or five year old to take charge of the household.

Training Methods

When training it is important for parents to keep in mind that there are two levels of positive discipline. First, comes instruction discipline. This is where the parent informs or instructs a child on what is right and how to do what is right and what is wrong and the dangers of doing wrong, such as, a warning. Remember, most discipline is instructive and encouraging, only then comes corrective. Second, corrective discipline is when the parents will use the term "NO!" This is the time punitive

measures may be taken if behavior does not change. It might involve a time out or a spanking. But both levels of discipline are positive and loving when done correctly.

◆ **By Verbal Communication**

A mother called into a radio program giving advice on parenting. She asked the expert when she should start training her child who is now four years old. He said, "Hurry, home and start right now you have missed the best four years of training already." Parents need to start early. How early? Well, studies show that even children in the womb respond to sounds and other stimuli. I had a mother tell me that when she was pregnant with her first child that when I started to preach the baby became very active in the womb and continued to be so throughout services. Some fathers read bible stories to the yet to be born child. He is taking Deuteronomy 6:6,7 to a whole new level. *"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."*

We are living in a very permissive age where parents rarely say "no" to their children. This isn't just a modern day problem for even David had this problem as a father. It was said concerning his son Adonijah, that David had never displeased him at anytime by asking "why have you done this or that?" It is no wonder that Adonijah later rebelled against his father and tried to take over the kingdom. We read of his story in 1 Kings 1:5,6: *"Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying 'I will be king.' so he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. And his father had never crossed him at anytime by asking, 'Why have you done so?'"* Consider the personal sorrow of David and the grief caused the entire family by his three spoiled sons, Ammon, Absalom and Adonijah.

Some parents have been told by "experts" never to say "no". What give them the right to tell parents "no" about saying "no." God is the all time expert and Father. He tells His children "thou shalt not" throughout His instructions. *"For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights."* *"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?"* (Prov 3:12; Heb 12:7). In fact, "no" needs to be one of the first words a child learns. It is for their own safety. It has to be said a lot. "No! Stop eating the house plants" or "No! Do not put your pacifier up my nose" are two commands I never thought I would have to say a hundred times a day.

As children grow older the command "no" will often be responded to with "Why?" In time children need to know why they are to do and not do certain things. Sometimes parents will give an encyclopedic answer: "#1 If it doesn't get out of here pretty quick it is going to start smelling. #2 Then it may start to grow. #3 health department is going to come and condemn our household. NOW GET IT OUT!" However, parents need to be submitted to and obeyed whether the child can comprehend the "why". My good friend Russ wanted me to ask my dad on a Sunday afternoon, if I could go with Russ to the state lodge to play pool and pinball. He said, "no". That was good enough for me. Russ sent me back to get the "why" from my dad. My father answered, "I am your father and I made a decision and it was "no". You came to me for permission and I did not give it, you do not always need a no. You need to respect my decision as your father." Well, that one blew Russ' mind. But I thought about it and my father already had given me enough instruction and example to know the "why." It was Sunday. It was the Lord's Day. I did not need to go out and play every day. Sometimes it is a wise parents who learns when to answer "why" with "because" Which translates: "I am your parent. I'm in charge".

◆ **By Setting a Good Example**

Children learn by watching us. In fact, they begin very early to observe and to imitate. Can you set a perfect example? Obviously not. Parents are not perfect, and sometimes they need to apologize to their children for bad examples.

In the old Testament we see children setting a bad example and the next generation following it. Kings of both Israel and Judah often taught their children to turn from serving the one true God and serving idols. Parents need to realize there are little eyes always watching them. How are you going to instill in your child the wrongdoing of smoking drugs when you smoke nicotine?

The Bible is filled the parents who set a good example for their children. Noah's example of righteous obedience lead his family into the ark. Lot's example of righteous living in Sodom lead his two daughters out of the doom cities of the plain. Eunice and Lois' devotion to God's Word lead Timothy to become a Christian and a preacher.

◆ **By Praise and Encouragement**

When little Steve takes his first steps at eleven months old the praise and applause from family and friends would make an outsider thing the child had just won a Nobel Prize in Physics. And this is nothing compared to the praise given when they make their first deposit in their potty training chair. In time they praise gives way to discouraging words of frustration: "Why can't you be like your sister?" or "You'll never amount to anything!"

There are times when parents need to warn to correct bad behavior. However, this needs to be balanced out with words of praise and encouragement. Good behavior needs to be reinforced throughout a child's life.

◆ **By Using the Rod of Correction**

When I was growing up in a family with six kids, ages one to ten, the great equalizer for my parents was the "Board of Education" to make us mind them. This paddle was often accompanied with a song: "I need thee every hour." The words which came from my mother's mouth which struck terror in my soul was: "You just wait till your father gets home." He was a stern disciplinarian. My parents provided the discipline and I provided the stern. That will make a child ship-shape in not time.

Many children today would have no idea of what a trip behind the woodshed involved. I assure you it was not for the purpose of seeing how much wood was stacked there. You knew the rules; and when you chose to break them, there were consequences to be paid. Why the difference? Mankind believes he knows better how to train children than previous generations. After all, they can read books on it by experts. Does the following poem sound familiar?

Junior bit the meter man, Junior bit the cook,
Junior's anti social now (According to the book).
Junior smashed the clock & lamp, Junior hacked the tree
(Destructive trends are treated In chapters 2 & 3).
Junior threw his milk at Mom. Junior screamed for more.
(Notes on self-assertiveness Are found in chapter 4).
Junior tossed his shoes & socks Out into the rain.
(Negation, that is normal -- Disregard the strain).
Junior set Dad's shirt on fire, Whittled Grandpa's pine.
(that's to gain attention, See page 89).
Grandpa seized a slipper, and Yanked Junior 'cross his knee.
(He's read nothing but the Bible since 1973).

Parents are encouraged to use the rod of correction, because there are great blessings to be gleaned from disciplining your children. Solomon said, *"Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul"* (Proverbs 29:17). Despite this, the greater wisdom of men condemn spanking. The wise Proverbs of the wisest man in the world, not to mention the inspiration of the all-knowing God, commands discipline. This includes corporal punishment with the "rod of correction". *"Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell"* (Proverbs 23:13;14) *"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him"* (Proverbs 29:15). "Rod" is from the Hebrew word *yahsaar* which literally means "a stick, a club, a staff, a weapon". A rod will teach them to respect their father's authority. In Texas *yahsaar* means "yes, sir." Children should be thankful for a father who believes in laying on of hands when they are getting out of hand.

Spanking or the rod of correction is a very controversial subject. This is because some equate it to child abuse. In defense of Solomon and God who gave him his wisdom, the Bible never encourages

child abuse but it does advocate for punitive and corrective discipline. Child abuse is a wide-spread problem today, and this has created a dilemma for godly parents. But those who trust God can be reassured that He commands parents to discipline in a way so as not to bring harm. *"Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction"* (Pr. 19:18).

"Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die" (Prov. 23:13). The footnote on that last phrase reads, "causing him to die." God doesn't want anyone abusing or killing his child, but proper chastening will not produce death but *"peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby"* (Hebrews 12:11). "You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. 23:14). The Book of Proverbs and Hebrews teach a parental course on Rod of Correction 101 not Rod of Destruction. It is not calling for a steel pipe, a two-by-four or anything causing physical damage or death. It may called for a hand popping a bottom, peach tree switch, a leather belt, kitchen spoon or spatula, a ruler or paint stick. Things which do not do physical harm. My mother loved to you a branch from our lilac bush and leave a few leaves on the end. This gave it the sound of a mighty rushing wind with spanking. These don't kill them. They just think they are going to die. They will get the job done. They all were used on me. They didn't hurt a thing...now I use to six foot eight and now just six foot two but what difference does that make. In too many households, everything is controlled by switches except the children. But if you want bright children use the switch.

A renown Las Angeles doctor has said, "the greatest social disaster of this century is the belief that abundant love makes discipline unnecessary." Parents will argue, "I love my child too much to spank them." Yet Solomon in his great wisdom warned, *"he who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly"* (Proverbs 13:24). Solomon the wisest and inspired man of God calls for loving corrective discipline. For a parent to love their children is to discipline them with the rod of correction.

The motive behind discipline whether it be instructional or correctional is love. Love and discipline are not in opposition to each other but two sides of the same coin. Mothers are instructed to *"love their children"* (Tit. 2:4). It is an expression of love to a child to show them they are so important that you will take the time out to help them behave.

Yet how does love allow for pain. Pain is not negative. Pain is a blessing by warning us to move our hand off a hot stove before we get third degree burns. Those who are in atheistic training have a motto: "No pain, no gain." What parent would refuse a life-saving or protection for a deadly dease claiming they love their child too much to cause them to suffer the pain of a needle giving them a shot in their little thigh or buttocks. Many father has spanked a child for doing something dangerous, like putting things in a light socket or playing with scissors in order to give them a little painful reminder so their do not have to live with memory greater pain and scares the rest of their lives. True love inflicts minor pain to produce major benefits. A mother endures great pain to bring a child into the world, and it seems only reasonable that the child endure the pain of discipline so that he might bring joy to his mother and others. *"The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother"* (Pr. 29:15). *"The Proverbs of Solomon: a wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother"* (10:1).

What about the pain of removing a thorn or a sand spur? Shall a loving parent leave the thorn because it would cause pain to extract it? Remember the rod of correction is a tool to remove foolishness

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him" (Pr. 22:15). "Foolishness - the love of mischief, the waywardness of self-will belonging to children" (Pulpit Comm. 424).

Infants come into this world lacking can kind of training or discipline or wisdom. Babies are by nature the most self-centered beings in the universe. In the beginning they are totally dependent on their parents. The baby screams when he wants to eat, and a few minutes ago was not soon enough; he screams when he wants to be held or changed. After awhile all this has to come to a screeching halt. If the parents continue to cater to every whim and whine, they will turn their little cutie into a little tyrant. At a certain age, when the parent wants to change the diaper and his majesty decides otherwise. And now a war of wills has been engaged. When this kind of foolishness pops up, it's time to pop the

perpetrator and try to drive it "*far from him.*" NO, it does not warp their little personality. Instead it helps them grow up to be a wise person. After all, this world is filled with enough fools.

How does a 110 pound mama handle a 220 pound sixteen year old? By disciplining him when he weighs twenty pounds. No greater joy than a parents to see a child walking in the truth (3 Jn. 1). Conversely, there is no greater pain than to see a child walking in err. Fortified with the wisdom found in God's word, accompanied with many prayers, and the determined dedication to discipline our children, we can train up a child in the way he should go. God bless all parents in accomplishing that goal.

Questions:

1. What does it mean to "*train up*" children"?
2. What are some of the end goals in disciplining children?
2. Who is the trainer and who is the trainee?
3. How should children respond to the fact that their parents are the boss of them?
4. How early should a parent begin training their children?
5. List the names of the three sons David had problems with and explain why?
6. Why is the word "no" so important in parenting?
7. List some examples of good parents in the Bible and explain what made them good.

8. According to the books of Proverbs and Hebrews what are some of the benefits of using the rod of correction?

9. Does the Bible advocate child abuse via the rod of correction? Explain.

10. Is loving your children incompatible with causing pain their discipline? Explain.

11. What does the rod of correction remove from the child?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some of the reasons some parents reject the idea of spanking.

2. How should Christian respond to the world's objections to parents spanking their children?

Homework: Find ways to help promote Bible based discipline of children by parents in this world.

Communication is Key

Fights or strong disagreements within marriage are inevitable, normal, even a necessary part of every marriage. Disagreements need not be viewed as an obstacle, but an opportunity for understanding and growth. It could be the very thing needed to keep the lines of communication up and running. A couple that acts like a turtle retreating into its shell every time a disagreement comes along will not grow closer, but only apart as their difference go unresolved. A man told his buddy about a terrible fight he had with his wife. The friend asked, "How did it end." "Well, she came crawling to me on her knees", the husband replied. His friend then inquired, "What did she have to say". "She said, 'Come on out from underneath that bed, you coward!'"

Why do couples get into ugly fights? Foremost is poor communication. A woman once came to a judge for a divorce. The judge asked: "Do you have any grounds for divorce?" The woman replied, "Grounds? We just have 2 acres." The judge says, "Lady, that's not what I'm talking about. What I mean is, do you have a grudge?" The woman thinks for a minute and then replies "Garage? No, we park our car in front of the house." By now, the judge is getting a little frustrated! He sort of snaps at her, "Ma'm, does your husband beat you up?" She replies, "No. I wake up way before he does ever morning." The Judge practically yells at her, "Lady, why do you want a divorce?" The woman looks at the Judge and replies, "Judge, me and my husband just don't seem to be able to communicate!"

Ann Landers wrote, "The most important single ingredient in a marriage is the ability to communicate... most marital problems stem from the inability of two people to talk to each other." This is also true in all other relationships.

The initial stage in marriage counseling is restoring healthy communication. What is involved in effective communication in marriage?

✓ **Being a Good Listener**

Three little old ladies were traveling on a train in England. One said, "is This Wimberly?" Another responded, "No, this is Thursday." The third lady said, "I am too; let's get a drink". These three demonstrate both the need to be an effectual speaker and well as an efficient listener.

The best communicators are those who first learn to be good listeners. The world is filled with talkers, but what effective communication requires is a listener who hears more than just words. "Researchers say that good listening is accompanied by a slight rise in temperature, a faster heartbeat, and a quicker circulation of blood...listening is not a passive activity!" Jesus had a problem with those who had ears, but did not get his message because they would not listen. *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: `Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear" (Matthew 13:9, 14-16).* "Research indicates that we listen at about 25% efficiency, and that much misunderstanding is attributable to poor listening."

Every good communicator must be an active listener. This can be done by maintaining good eye contact and avoid the glassy eyed look which is a dead give away that you are think about how to respond or react instead of opening your mind. It is helpful to learn to read between the lines. Listen to what they are really trying to communicate. Put your ears on first, your mouth second. *"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).* Repeat what you think you heard before you give your answer. *"He who answers a matter before he hears it,*

it is folly and shame to him" (Proverbs 18:13).

Some comic quipped, "The only one who really listens to both sides of an argument in a marriage are the neighbors." Don't do dirty laundry in public for all to see and hear. This only embarrasses our spouse and the people who witness it. It also builds a wall of resentment.

✓ **Never Using "Always" & Always Avoiding "Never"**

After you have listened and gathered all the facts avoid using generalizations, such as, "you always..." or "you never...". Statements like, "You never talk out the trash" and "Well, you always burn the toast" are seldom ever true. These are seldom, if ever, true.

✓ **Finding Common Ground**

Find and focus on something you can agree on in every argument. Otherwise, you may be like the wife who said, "the only thing my husband and I have in common is that we were married on the same day."

✓ **Fighting the Problem Not the Person**

Next, couples stunt communication by way of their dirty looks, sarcastic remarks, dominating the conversation, and intimidating their spouse with either verbal or physical threats. Remember to fight the problem and not each other. This is perhaps the most important suggestion in preventing a fruitless fight. When a spouse sees their partner as the problem in their marriage and they must be changed if the marriage is to move forward or survive, they have focused on the person and not the real problem. Couple must learn to act as a team to defeat the problems. Try not to drag others into the argument. After all, a spouse's alcoholic uncle has nothing to do with him forgetting to take out the trash.

Remember, the goal of a family fight is not to decide a winner and a loser. It is to bring the disagreement under control so that both spouses are benefitted and not hurt by the experience. Although I must admit, my wife lets me have the last two words in any argument: "Yes Mam!"

✓ **Being Kind**

Words have a great power for hurting, or healing. *"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing"* (Proverbs 12:18). You can use your words to start a fight or stop a fight, its your choice. A kind answer has greater power than a loud, bitter retort so speak with kindness in your voice. *"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger"* (Proverbs 15:1). Watch your tone of voice, body language, and timing your response.

✓ **Forgiving One Another**

Paul wrote, *"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you"* (Eph. 4:32). Communication over a disagreement may involve one's willingness to forgive and forget. Couples foolishly forgive without forgetting. Forgetting is very important because in the next fight you don't want to rehash all the pervious ones. Some spouses get hysterical when quarreling and others become historical. They bolster their agreement but going back in the history of their marriage and digging up every problem she has never had with her husband. Its like the story of two little boys who each had little kittens. They loved them dearly. They even loved them to death. So as instructed they went out back behind the shed to bury them. However, they left their cat's tails sticking up out of the ground so that when ever they wanted to pet their cat they could go out behind the shed pull up the dead cat's tail and pet the rotten thing. When the big fight is all over and the police have left and the neighbors have returned home, someone has to clean up the mess. This requires kindness and being compassionate. A couple needs to tend to each other's wounds. The time has come "to kiss and make up".

✓ **Being Honest**

Nothing destroys a relationship quicker than dishonesty. Trusting one another is essential to working to build or rebuild a marriage. *"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another"* (Eph. 4:25). If honesty is maintained from the beginning, when fights do occur no one is set up for a surprise punch.

✓ **Speaking Truth in Love**

Whenever with whomever a Christian has a conversation they must be *"speaking the truth in love"* (Eph. 4:15). Although the great love chapter (I Corinthians 13) does not give us a definition of love it

does tells us how love will act: *"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails"* (I Corinthians 13:4-8).

✓ **Admitting when you are Wrong**

Still others cannot stay away from an argument. Winning an argument is a means by which to boost their ego. Like a little boy heading for a mud puddle, they would like to splash right through any disagreement instead of learning to go around.

When you are wrong be humble enough to stop arguing and confess your fault. When your spouse is wrong be loving enough to forgive them. It takes a lot of humility to tell your spouse: "I was wrong." Or harder let is admitting: "Okay, you were right." (I can't tell you how many times I have had to hear that in my marriage. I getting a little tired of hearing it.)

✓ **Being Angry**

It is alright to be angry. That's right! God commands Christians to have this emotion. Just as He has commanded us to "be kind." Paul wrote, *"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil"* (Eph. 4:26,27). It is not a sin to be angry or even to let you spouse know that you are experiencing this God-given emotion. Just make sure you keep it under control before the governor has to declare martial law and FEMA is sent in clean up the disaster.

✓ **Controlling Emotions**

"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Eph. 4:26). This verse is a permissive imperative. The emotion of anger is commanded of Christians just as we are commanded to be kind. Anger is a God given emotion. Yet letting your anger get out of control does not meet with God's approval. When anger slips out of one's control it is sinful. It is okay to be angry, but when we attack the person rather than the problem anger becomes danger.

Several things can be done to assist you in controlling anger in an argument. Lower your voices one octave rather than raising them two. Ask God to help you control our emotions by saying: "let's pray about this". As the verse above says do not let the emotion linger too long. If anger goes on to long it will grow too strong. And Anger is just one letter away from Danger.

✓ **Timing is Important**

A proper time exists for disagreeing and there is an improper time for disagreeing. Together a couple needs to set the time. Kindly postpone it by saying: "This isn't the right place to discuss it. Let's deal with it a little later."

However, it must be noted that procrastination will only allow problems to grow and the relationship to deteriorate. *"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil"* (Eph. 4:26,27). The quicker the discuss begins the sooner it will be over.

When your spouse first walks through the door from work it is not the time to jump into a disagreement. When the kids are up or when one is suffering a massive headache, it is not a fair time to fight. A proper time exists for disagreeing and there is an improper time for disagreeing. Together a couple needs to set the time. Kindly postpone it by saying: "Honey, this isn't the best time for me to deal with this because,..." or "This isn't the right place to discuss it. Let's deal with it a little later."

A couple was once asked to explain how they were able to stay together for 50 years. The old farmer replied, "Well, when either of us had a bad day. We would have a signal to alert each other. I would roll up one pant leg and she would pen up the corner of her apron. So, when I came in and saw her apron penned up I would know things have not been going well. I would try not to bring up a disagreement and help her out. Of course, she would do the same for me if I came in with one pant leg rolled up. This way, we kept ourselves from many a quarrel. Now, if I came in with one pant leg roll up and saw her apron penned up, I would just turn around and go back to the barn to set with the chickens."

However, it must be noted that procrastination will only allow problems to grow and the relationship to deteriorate. The quicker the discuss begins the sooner it will be over. The shorter the argument the sooner they can start mending the relationship.

Remember, effective communication is when the right person receives the right message at the

right time, and with the right result.

✓ **Using Encouraging Words**

Paul continues: *"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers"* (Eph. 4:29). "Corrupt" literally means "rotten, putrid". Such tactless speech will not help keep the fight right. On the other hand, "...tactfulness is an approach to another human being which involves being sincere and open in communication while at the same time showing respect for the other person's feelings and taking care not to hurt him unnecessarily." Tact is displayed when one takes care to watch what they say, how they say it, their tone of voice, their body language and facial expressions.

The term *"edification"* means to build-up. When we speak our words are to be chosen well in order to build one another up. Just as a man builds a house of cards. His careful choices and moves determines how high the paper edifice will rise.

Words can escalate the conversation to a personal attack on each other or defuse the situation and solve the problem. *"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice"* (Eph. 4:31). These only builds a wall of resentment.

Keep the communication positive. Anyone can point out a problem in a marriage. It takes two wise heads working together to come up with a solution and implement it. Be ready like Paul, with a positive solution. This will help take the sting out of the negative remarks. With any marriage conflicts are never 100% bad. If you look there is usually at least one positive thing you can bring up to reaffirm your spouse. Remember, don't judge your spouse too harshly for not being perfect, if they were perfect chances are they would have never married you.

✓ **Do Not Nag Each Other**

In the dog house; on the rooftop; and off to the desert. These phrases represent the problem of nagging.

Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3). He spoke more on quarrelsome wives than anyone else in the Bible. I find it interesting that a man who had hundreds of wives - felt the need to comment on the contentious and quarrelsome ones. *"Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman"* (Proverbs 21:19). *"A foolish son is the ruin of his father, and the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping"* (Proverbs 19:13). . Nagging can ruin a marriage like the constant drip of water can wear down even the hardest rock. Drip, Drip, Drip... . He wrote, *"better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman"* (Proverbs 21:9). (The same statement is again recorded in Prov 25:24). Houses back in Bible days had flat roofs. It was actually common for men to take a mat and relax or take a nap on the rooftop. A man could take his chances with wind and rain on the roof because sometimes it's better than the tempest within the four walls. If you had a choice between living in a King's palace or living in the corner on a roof, which would you choose? Solomon says the choice depends on whether or not you are living with a contentious wife.

Nagging is not just a wife problem. Men can do it too. When it comes to nagging wives do not start off wanting to communicate this way. She will at first make a few complaints which are delivered in a loving and respectful manner. Before long she feels he is not listening. So her tone and words become more and more quarrelsome. She resents being ignored. Since he is not listening, her frustrations begin to grow. He may give her the silent treatment, but this only proves he never listens. He may try to run away and spend more time at work or with his friends. This only infuriates her more and adds fuel to the fire.

How is a husband who is being nagged by his wife to respond to the situation? First, do not fight fire with fire. *"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out..."* (Proverbs 26:20). If you have been ignoring her or giving her the silent treatment stop. Do not run away for the situation face seriously with an open heart and ears. Next, a husband needs to stay calm. *"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts"* (Proverbs 17:14). It is important to first acknowledge her feelings and try to understand her anger, frustrations and worries. *"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise"* (Proverbs 10:19). Listen first to her, even if she has vent

for a while. Only after listening can a husband define the problem, work as a team to develop a solution, and find a time to implement it. When it is time to talk remember: *"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger"* (Proverbs 15:1).

What can a wife do to deal with the temptation and even the habit of nagging? First, remember *"the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God"* (1 Peter 3:3,4). Next, keep in mind the respect for the head of the family. *"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church"* (Eph. 5:23). Try to use kind words of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 who *"opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness"* (Proverbs 31:26). Nagging tends to shame and blame. Also wives need to choose the right tone. *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver"* (Proverbs 25:11). Finally, wives should practice discretion. *"As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion"* (Proverbs 11:22).

If you practice these suggestions and others you will find that your disagreements will be effectual instead of calamitous.

Questions:

1. Why are family disagreements unavoidable and essential?
2. Why do couples get into ugly fights?
3. Why is it so important to be a good listener?
4. What are the problems associated with the use of the terms "always" and "never" when discussing disagreements?
5. Instead of fighting the problem as a team what do most couples end up doing?
6. What is the power of a kind word during an argument?
7. What does forgiveness involve that can help prevent future arguments?
8. What role does truth and love play in good communication?

9. What are something to remember about being angry and communication?
10. What does the communication of encouraging words do for the other person you are having a disagreement with?
11. Where is a better place to be than with a nagging spouse according to Proverbs?
12. Why do some wives fall into the temptation of nagging their husbands?
13. What can a wife do to avoid the temptation to nag?
14. How should a spouse respond positively to contention and nagging?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some good times and some bad times to have a discussion over disagreements between couples or family members?
2. How can better communication help with preventing contentiousness and nagging?

Homework: Do a self-examination of your communication skills this week. What can you do to improve?

Is an Indefinite Marital Separation a Sin?

A common solution, employed by some married couples when they are experiencing difficulties in their relationship, is to indefinitely separate from each other. Since they do not have a scriptural reason for divorce, this seems to be a legitimate option. The couple has no plan in place to end the separation and no efforts to even try to reconcile by either one or both spouses. Yet neither have a right to divorce or have plans to ever get a divorce.

How does God (who created marriage) feel about such indefinite separations? Is an indefinite marital separation a scriptural solution to troubled marriages? Is an indefinite separation sinful?

First, it may be wise to define the terms. A “separation” is when a husband and wife stop living together as husband and wife. However, they are not yet divorced. Using the term “indefinite” indicates the couple do not have plans to divorce and do not have plans to reconcile. Indefinite means “lasting for an unknown or unstated length of time.”

Looking for a Loophole

When the Pharisees asked Jesus if a man could divorce his wife for just any reason, He stated very clearly : “NO!” He only gave one reason for divorce and that is for sexual immorality (Matthew 19:3-9). Some spouses hope to remain “faithful” to the letter of the law and will not divorce, but will separate from their spouse. They will argue, “no one knows how terrible my marriage is and surely God doesn’t want me to be unhappy for the rest of my life.” Could this be a loophole some are looking for in an effort to effectively end their marriage without getting a divorce? Why are some intent on finding such a loophole in God’s Will concerning marriage and divorce?

▶ **Unhappy**

The spouse who separates will claim, “I’m just not happy anymore. I don’t feel like I married the right person or I feel maybe that this was just a mistake. We got married too young. We can never seem to get on the same page and I’m not happy...besides God wants me to be happy.” These same souls thought they would get married and live happily ever after in marital bliss. When the honeymoon is over and reality sets in they lack the maturity to stick with the marriage. They see separation as their way out - right now.

However, God did not call us to be happy but to be holy. He called us to persevere not to give up on marriage. His will is for married couple to be steadfast in their vows, not separated from the one they vowed to love, honor and cherish. God wants husbands and wives to be conformed to His will, not have their way, so they can be comfortable.

▶ **Unsatisfied**

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband”* (1 Corinthians 7:1-3). Some spouses no longer feel satisfied with their spouse, therefore they seek to end the relationship through an indefinite separation.

▶ **Unsafe**

A husband got drunk one night. He was known to get a little rough with his wife in this condition, but this time he beat her black and blue and threatened to kill her. She took her son and fled to my home where my wife looked after her. Some might argue with the Lord that this is a legitimate grounds for divorce or to indefinitely separate. However, after working with the husband and getting him some help. The marriage was restored. They were separated for one week. Later after his attempted suicide, he

repented of his ways, returned to the Lord, and in time became a deacon in a large congregation.

Another argument that is made for separation involves emotional abuse and/or feeling unsafe. Who has the authority to determine what is a suitable grounds for indefinite separation? God joined the couple together. The only emotional abuse He recognizes is adultery. If a wife burns the toast, is that abuse and grounds for separation? If in a heated argument, the husband and wife exchange a few blows, is that grounds for permanent separation? Jesus, said, *“therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”* (Matthew 19:6b).

► **Unfaithful**

Perhaps the only legitimate reason for an indefinite separation would be in the case of sexual immorality. A husband or wife learns their spouse has been unfaithful. They separate to determine whether or not the marriage can be saved. If separation leads to divorce, okay. After all, Jesus allows for divorce for fornication. Yet if separation leads to reconciliation, better. Reconciliation of the troubled marriage without separation may be the best.

Reasons for Separation

There are several reasons why some couples will separate. First, there is fear. This may be caused by physical threats or emotional distress. Second, many more will abandon their marriage due to fatigue. They just cannot take the rigors of married life any longer. It is far easier for them to escape from a troubled marriage than it is to heal it. Finally, the most common reason for these indefinite separations is facilitation. If a spouse wants to pursue an extra-marital relationship, it is far safer and easier to do so while separated from their spouse. Others want to live the life of a single person where they do not have to deal with the constraints of marriage. The husband does not have to consider his wife, but can feel free to go and do as he pleases. The wife does not have to be in submission to her husband. Separation helps to facilitate the free and unrestrained lifestyle, they desire. There is a possibility the choice to separate may involve more than one of these reasons.

Proof Text for Indefinite Separation

The Bible does mention separation in 1 Corinthians chapter seven. In fact, some believe they have found a proof-text for indefinite marital separation. Paul wrote, *“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife”* (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). Note that the New King James Version uses the term “depart” whereas other translations, such as the English Standard Version, uses the term “separate.” Is Paul saying that it is okay for a couple to separate, so long as they do not get remarried? If so, is an indefinite separation a God-approved alternative to divorce?

First of all, if the passage gives permission for a wife to separate from her husband, what conditions allow her to separate? If her husband does not take out the garbage, can she up and leave him? If he spends money on himself rather than her, can she end the marriage with an indefinite separation?

Paul is not giving married couples the option to separate or divorce, so long as they remain unmarried or reconcile. A parallel would be John’s statement in 1 John 2:1-2 : *“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”* Does John give permission for Christians to sin so long as they have an Advocate with the Father? Absolutely not! He is commanding Christians NOT to sin. However, Christians will sin. When they sin, they have a solution: Jesus Christ. Likewise, Paul is commanding couples NOT to separate. But what if some disobey the command and sin by separating. Then they must suffer the consequences: remain unmarried or be reconciled.

For example, a father tells his teenage daughter not to drive the family car while he and her mom are out of town. He goes on to warn her, “but if you do drive the car, you will be responsible for any damages or tickets you incur.” Does this give the daughter permission to drive the car? Could she

argue, “Dad said it is okay for me to drive the family car, just so long as I do not wreck it or get a ticket”? Absolutely not. He is only telling her, there may be consequences if she disobeys him and drives the family car.

Mere separation is not under discussion by Paul in verses ten and eleven. The same Greek word *chorizo* (put asunder, separate, depart) in verse ten is used in Matthew 19:6 when Jesus discusses divorce with the Pharisees. The first part of verse ten “a wife is not to depart from her husband” is parallel with the end of verse eleven where Paul says, “*a husband is not to divorce his wife.*” The “separation” in view in the Corinthians situation is a legal one which finalizes into divorce.

For the sake of argument, suppose Paul is dealing with or including separation in this text. Nothing here permits indefinite separation. In fact, Paul uses the simplest prohibition: “depart not” reinforced by the forceful command: “charge” which is done with supreme authority: “the Lord.” Instead of a proof-text permitting separation, this passage is a divine command against separation.

Temporary, Controlled Separation

Verses ten and eleven of 1 Corinthians chapter seven are dealing with divorce and not mere separation, however verse five does come closer to the modern idea of a marital separation. Paul warns, “*Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control*” (1 Corinthians 7:5). This passage may be the only time the Bible speaks about a “separation” apart from divorce. It mentions a “fasting” or cessation from marital intimacy.

Unlike the indefinite marital separation practiced by some today, Paul is giving guidelines for a temporary, controlled separation. This may or may not involve couples taking up separate living quarters. This form of separation must be for a definite (not indefinite) period of time and by mutual agreement. The activities involved by both spouses during the time they have consented to is for them to participate in “fasting and prayer.” The purpose behind God commanding such a temporary and controlled separation is to keep Satan from using this opportunity to tempt either one or both spouses to lose self-control and commit fornication.

Indefinite Separation Is Unscriptural

Now the focus of the rest of the article shifts to the unscriptural nature of indefinite separation. Although there may be more, please consider the follow eight ways such an indefinite separation violates the Will of God for marriage.

▶ **Promotes Adultery**

When a man puts away his wife without her first committing adultery, Jesus says the husband is in fact causing her to commit adultery. On the Sermon of the Mount He said, “*Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery*” (Matthew 5:31-32). Based on the same principle when a man separates from his wife, he endangers her soul by allowing Satan to tempt her and in her lack of self-control she may commit fornication. The man cannot argue at this point: “look she committed adultery, I am the innocent party. I am free to divorce her and marry another.” The husband in this instance is not an “innocent party” to her lack of self-control. In fact, he helped facilitate her sin by his indefinite separation.

▶ **Hinders Reconciliation**

1 Corinthians 7:5 and 10,11 encourage reconciliation of those temporarily separated with mutual consent and those who have unscripturally separated in divorce. However, when a couple are indefinitely separated, one or both spouses will often get comfortable in this state and not even attempt to reconcile. After just a few months they may feel a sense of peace in their new found single (but technically married) status. Their desire to work things out with their estranged spouse dissipates into apathetic contentment. After separation they have a sense of peace. The desire to work on their marriage quickly evaporates. They will start to think, “Well, I am not completely happy, but it feels good not to be trapped in a miserable marriage. Why should I go back to the agony of a struggling and

hopeless relationship, when I feel happy for the first time in years.” At this point resolving issues becomes more of a wishful thought than a workable option.

▶ **Encourages Divorce**

In Malachi 2:16 God makes it very clear how He feels about divorce. *“For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the Lord of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”* What faithful saint wants to be guilty of doing something God hates and is violent and treacherous? With an indefinite separation they at least are not angering the Lord. After all, it is actual divorce God hates. Such thinking is using a humanly divisive loophole to divorce one’s spouse without a legal document. Furthermore, many indefinite separations eventually end up in the divorce courts.

▶ **Discourages the Purpose of Marriage**

When God finished His creation He observed it was good. Yet on the sixth day when He created man He recognized that *“It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him”* (Gen. 2:18). So God created woman from man and established the institution of marriage, so they could dwell together and the man would not be alone. An indefinite separation of man and wife discourages this Divine purpose of marriage.

▶ **Hinders Marital Responsibilities**

A mutual duty of husbands and wives are to fulfill is their sexual intimacy. Paul commanded, *“nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does”* (1 Corinthians 7:2-4).

In marriage God has given the husband and wife other duties they are to perform in relation to each other. Husbands are to *“Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun”* (Ecclesiastes 9:9). In First Peter 3:7 it says, *“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”* It is hard for a man to “live happily with” or “dwell with” a wife if they are separated. Other commands cannot be fulfilled by men who are separated from their wives. “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them” (Colossians 3:19). Calling for men to be Christ-like husbands Paul wrote, *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ...So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself”* (Eph. 5:23,28).

Wives also have responsibilities in marriage which are all but impossible for her to fulfill when involved in an indefinite separation from her husband. Paul also calls upon wives to be church-like brides to their husbands. *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ...Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything”* (Eph. 5:22,24). Paul also wrote, *“wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord”* (Colossians 3:18). Peter command *“wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives”* (1 Peter 3:1). Titus was to teach the older sister in Christ *“to admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed”* (Titus 2:4-5).

To sum up their mutual duties in the marriage Paul wrote, *“nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband”* (Eph. 5:33). It is hard enough for couples to fulfill these duties when they are living together as husband and wife. When they are separated for an indefinite period of time, obeying these commands becomes near impossible.

▶ **Hinders Parental Duties**

Not only are mothers to love their children and care for them, Paul commanded: *“and you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the*

Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). While separated the children often become weaponized in the on going attacks against spouses. The children are innocent and they desire to have a mommy and a daddy just like God intended. One Saturday at lunch a three year old daughter wanted to say a prayer before lunch. She prayed that her mommy come home, so they all could live with daddy. About the same time her six year old sister drew a picture. In her drawing she showed a beautiful blue sky with a bright yellow sun shining over a field of rich green grass with flowers. In the middle of the field were four people: her mommy and daddy with her and her little sister. They were all smiling and holding hands.

► **Destroys Influence and Sets a Bad Example**

Paul tells Titus the reason why older women are to teach the younger women to love their children and their husbands who they are to obey. The reason: *"that the word of God may not be blasphemed"* (Titus 2:4-5). When spouses separate for an indefinite period of time the message to the world is that marriage is not a permanent commitment before God. It tells the rest of the world that we are not going to let our light shine on the darkness. Instead, the bad example will influence them to either separate or divorce when every they feel their marriage is not working out or they are uncomfortable or unhappy. God's Will concerning marriage is not being exulted by these Christian couples separating.

If one couple in the church can separate indefinitely without sinning, then why cannot all marriages end in such separations. Is God pleased with a congregation full of married couples who are separated indefinitely without fornication being involved? If this behavior is permitted it will spread through a congregation like cancer through a body or like leaven through a loaf of bread. Paul warned the church at Corinth concerning a man who had taken his father's wife. *"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened"* (1 Corinthians 5:6b,7a).

If a couple fails to reconcile after encouragement, admonition, and rebuke; the congregation needs to enact church discipline upon both spouses or at least on the spouse who refuses to work on reconciling the marriage.

► **Destroys the Permanency of Marriage**

The only two reasons for a marriage to come to an end is: adultery (Matthew 5:31,32; 19:3-9) and death. Paul wrote, *"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband"* (Romans 7:2) and *"a wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 7:39). During most marriage vows a couple has promised to remain faithful to their marriage "till death do us part." However, many are destroying the permanency of their marriages by separating indefinitely.

Summary

In summary, there is no scripture which promotes or justifies an indefinite marital separation. Therefore, those who do so do not have authority from God's Word. In addition, the commands concerning a temporary, controlled separation or cessation of sexual intimacy are violated by an indefinite separation. The further examples of the sinful nature of these indefinite separations are evident in that they promote adultery, hinder reconciliation, encourage divorce without scriptural grounds, dishonors the Divine purpose of marriage, hinder husbands and wives from obeying their God-given roles in marriage, hinder fathers and mothers from fulfilling their parental duties, sets a bad example and destroys godly influence, as well as destroying the permanency of marriage. The only conclusion that can be arrived at is: indefinite marital separation is sinful.

Perhaps the greatest danger of these indefinite separations is to the souls of those participating in them. What will a husband and/or wife say when the Lord returns. "Yes Lord it is true that against your will I have separated from my spouse. We do not have a reason to divorce and I have not divorced. It is also true that I have not been making any efforts to reconcile or fulfill my duties to my spouse. However, I..." The truth is unless they are striving to reconcile when they face death or the Second Coming, they will be left without a scriptural reason when facing the Judgment of God.

Today, marriage as God ordained is under fire. It is being attacked by the government via the Supreme Court which rules that marriage can consist of a man and a man or a woman married to a woman. Some groups are clamoring for the recognition of polygamous marriages. The transgender and LGBTQ movements have further undermined the foundation of marriage. Not to mention the high divorce rate encouraged by the no fault divorce laws and denominations accepting divorce for any reason.

The New Testament church cannot sit idly by and allow further destruction of the Divine institution of marriage. Christians must teach the truth against indefinite separations. Congregations should discipline those spouses who refuse to obey God's Will. Christian couples need to set an example before the world to influence them to once more promote the Biblical concept of marriage. Jesus said, *"therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate"* (Matthew 19:6b).

Questions:

1. What is an indefinite marital separation?
2. What are some illegitimate reasons for couples separating?
3. What are some legitimate reasons for couples separating?
4. What is the proof-text many run to in support of an indefinite marital separation?
5. True False "Separate" in verses ten and eleven of 1 Corinthians can be and is translated "divorce"
6. Which verse in 1 Corinthians chapter seven is dealing with marital separation?
7. What rules does Paul give in regard to separation in 1 Corinthians 7?
8. How does indefinite marital separation promote adultery?

9. How does it hinder reconciliation?

10. How does it encourage divorce?

11. While indefinitely separated what marital duties are being neglected?

12. How does it hinder parenting?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are some things couples should do to avoid separation?

2. If a spouse will not return to the marriage does the other spouse have a right to get a divorce? Explain.

Homework: Find a couple who are struggling with their marriage and encourage them to get help instead of an indefinite marital separation or divorce.