

BIBLICAL
Marriage
ENRICHMENT
CLASS

By Matthew Black

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The Marriage Enrichment Book
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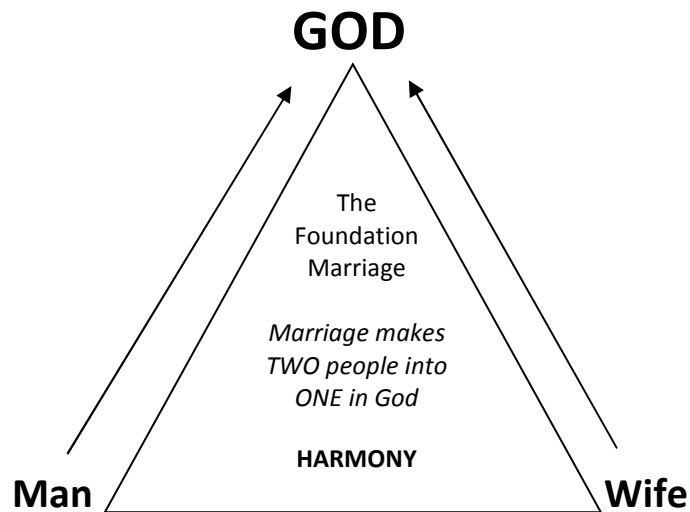
1 | God's design for marriage

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be ministered unto you.

MATTHEW 6:33, 1599 GENEVA BIBLE

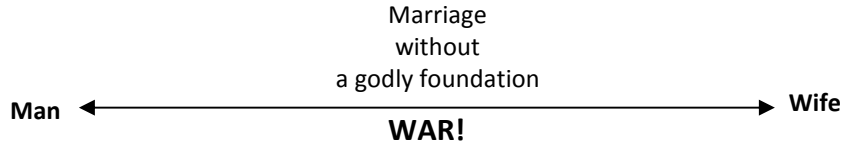
Marriage without God is just asking for a tug of war with an emphasis on the WAR! Only as husband and wife are looking to God can they have the same vision for life and arrive at the unity and harmony God intended.

Consider the following helpful illustration.



Take Your Eyes Off Your Marriage

Only as both husband and wife get their eyes off each other and focus on their Creator and His purpose for their lives can they actually live in harmony. Without God at the center of our lives, all we can expect is a battle of our own wills (as this illustration demonstrates).



None of us was made to be independent, fighting for our own way. That turns everything toxic and makes life difficult for ourselves and others. God created us to live in harmony with Him. Without that life of harmony with Him we cannot even be truly happy and satisfied in our inner lives, and so it makes it impossible to live in harmony with others, especially in a marriage relationship.

Marriage is designed to make us selfless people. Without a daily walk with our Creator through His Son Jesus Christ, we become very selfish people. God created us not to rule our own lives and make our own decisions, but to be His servants and to carry out His will.

In fact, God has designed marriage to be a picture of Who He is. God is generous. God is selfless. God is kind. God is good. God loves. God sacrifices. Consider two very well known verses.

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”

Jesus put it another way. He said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be ministered unto you” (Matthew 6:33, 1599 Geneva Bible). As we minister and sacrifice of ourselves for God’s Kingdom, He takes care of the rest. In other words, the very best way to work on our most important relationships is by getting our eyes off each other and on to our relationship with God.

Marriage: Good Idea or God’s Idea?

Many who think about marriage and family wonder if the idea came from the jungle story, “Me Tarzan, you Jane; come with me to live in my tree house.” Others may think about “The Flintstones” and imagine a man and a woman from a communal group in a cave deciding to move to their own cave together. They came up with a good idea, called it marriage and when children came along, called it family.

Genesis, written about 3500 years ago, makes it very clear to us that marriage was God’s good idea, however. God designed and defined marriage when He brought Eve to Adam (Gen 2:24). We see this model in a traditional church wedding where the bride is escorted down the aisle of a church by her father and brought to her groom. That wedding is made legal by our government through a marriage license, but the union is from God.

It was God’s design that a married man and woman become “one flesh” and through sexual intimacy to fulfill God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” (Gen 1:27-28). Adam and Eve’s obedience led to the births of Cain, Abel, Seth and many other sons and daughters (Genesis 4:1-2; 5:1-5). This marriage union resulted in a combination of parents (one father and one mother) and their children that God called a family.

If a married couple hopes to find the joy and happiness that God intended, each must apply the Scriptural principles God gave to fulfill His design for unity and intimacy. When Jesus talked about family He described the wise man as the one who built his house upon the Rock. This wise man was the one who took the truths of the Bible and obeyed them. When the principles of the Word of God guide the marriage, families are blessed because they have chosen a solid foundation to build upon. When the winds and floods of life come against them they successfully stand together (Mt 7:24-25).

There is a plethora of opinions in our world today about how to build a happy marriage. Some redefine marriage far from God's original design. God made it very clear that unless we let Him do the building, we labor in vain to build a family on man's ideas (Ps 127). In today's world with about 50% of marriages ending in divorce, we need to know God's blueprint and let Him be the master builder to have a happy marriage committed to a covenant of companionship.

A commitment is what a man and a woman say as they exchange their vows before God and witnesses in the wedding ceremony, "for as long as we both shall live" (1Cor 7:39). They vow "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health." This is a permanent relationship no matter what may come. They are committed to leave their parents, to hold fast to each other and to become one unit. Marriage is the only place where one plus one equals one (Gen 2:23-25).

The covenant of marriage in Scripture is a legal, binding agreement that cannot be broken. Traditional wedding vows bind a man and a woman to mutual obligations that each must fulfill, even in the face of difficulty. Covenant is the same word that describes God's contract with His people, the most comprehensive concept to define one's relationship

with God. He made this promise, “I will be their God, and they will be my people (Jer. 31:33). Just as God keeps His covenant promises to His people, He expects the husband and wife to keep their covenant promise to each other (Pro. 2:17; Mal. 2:14). He gave specific roles in this covenant relationship, commanding the husband to love his wife and the wife to respect her husband (Eph. 5:33).

Marriage is a commitment to a covenant of companionship. God’s reason for forming Eve was so that Adam wouldn’t be alone; he needed a companion (Gen. 2: 20-22). As Adam and Eve spent time together they grew in companionship both vertically with God and horizontally with each other, growing in many exciting spheres as a model for us to follow for meaningful and lasting companionship in marriage. As they interacted intimately with each other they grew in spiritual, social, intellectual, emotional and physical companionship (Gen. 1-3).

When one or more of these primary spheres of companionship is neglected, problems arise in a marriage. The good news is that a couple can find a solution in God’s Word for every issue that creates conflict (1 Cor. 10:13). Whether communication problems, financial struggles, sexual discord, parental disagreements or any other differences a couple may have, solutions can be found in God’s Word to build the harmony and oneness that God desires in marriage.¹

¹ From “Good Idea or God’s Idea?” by Dr Ronald Allchin of the Biblical Counseling Center of Arlington Heights.

HOMEWORK

1. What goals do you and your spouse have for developing greater companionship? List specific steps for how you will reach each goal. Talk about and implement them.
2. Memorize Matthew 7:24-25. Now find two or three principles from God's Word that will make a difference in your relationship next time the rain and winds of conflict blow. Some examples are: Eph 4:1-3, Ps 15:1, Ps 119:9-11, Josh 1:7-8, Eph 5:22-33, Jn 15:12, etc. Apply those to your conflict and watch the stability of the rock steady your relationship.

2 | God's fingerprints

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

EPHESIANS 2:10

Christians are God's workmanship, literally His masterpiece. God's fingerprints are all over His children. One of the most important books in the Bible defending the need for every Christian to display a life transformed by God's touch is the book of First John. This is a letter written by the Apostle John to churches that were being invaded by false teachers called Gnostics Christians. John's argument in the book is that these people are not really Christians at all because they do not live a transformed life.

The Gnostics taught several erroneous things. They taught that Jesus was not God and did not become the Christ until just before he went to the cross. They taught that he was actually corrupted with a sinful nature. They believed that the physical could never be redeemed and that only the spirit or soul was good. They concluded that you could act however you wanted and still be a Christian.

John writes the letter of 1 John to demonstrate that there is a radical transformation that occurs in the life of all of God's people. His purpose is to encourage true Christians

in holiness and to give each of God's children joy and assurance in knowing the marks of God's work in their lives. There are at least eleven of these marks or "fingerprints" of God in every believer's life.

Fingerprint 1: Fellowship with God
A Christian finds deep joy in the intimate fellowship of the Lord.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 1:3b-4: "...indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."

Fingerprint 2: Carefulness toward sin
A Christian has a *hatred* for sin.
He cannot live happily in sin.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 1:6-7, "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Fingerprint 3: Holiness for God
A Christian practices righteousness as a lifestyle.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 2:3, "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments."

Fingerprint 4: Separation from the World
The Christian is at war with this present world. He is not at home on this earth.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever”.

Fingerprint 5: Boldness for Christ

A Christian openly confesses the Person and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 2:23, “No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”

Fingerprint 6: Eagerness for Christ’s Return

A Christian eagerly awaits Christ’s return.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 3:2, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is”.

Fingerprint 7: Rejection by the World

Every Christian should expect that his new pattern of life will be rejected in some way by the world.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 3:13, “Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.”

Fingerprint 8: A Deep Love for Other Christians

A Christian has a deep affection for other saints, and loves to fellowship and serve in the community, communion, and accountability of the local church.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers."

Fingerprint 9: Prayerfulness

A Christian experiences answered prayer.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 3:22, "...whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him".

Fingerprint 10: Discernment

A Christian has the spiritual insight to discern between truth and error.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 4:6, "We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

Fingerprint 11:

Assurance by the Holy Spirit
A Christian experiences the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit.

Verse to Consider:

1 John 4:13, "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit".

HOMEWORK

1. Write out your testimony of salvation using the following outline – (try to use Scripture in each point to describe what happened)

- My life before Christ
- How I came to know Christ
- My life since I came to know Christ
- My confession of Christ, i.e. “Jesus is my....”

3 | the change model

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creations, old things are passing away; behold, all things are becoming new.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17, AUTHOR'S TRANSLATION

How does a person grow up spiritually? How do you become a mature follower of Christ?

Think about how your spiritual life began. You came to the cross by faith and embraced Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and was transformed eternally into this thing called “new life in Christ.” Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation; old things are passing away; all things are becoming new.”

And you changed. “Old things are passing away:” the way you used to think and act, the things that used to satisfy you, the things you used to pursue—one by one those things drop off and one by one new things are put in their place. “All things are becoming new.” Now, you think differently, you act differently, you have different priorities, values, interests, and pursuits; that’s the process of your new life in Christ.

If you’ve followed Christ Jesus for very long, you know this process doesn’t happen by being good or by going to church or by working hard for Christ, just as those things didn't save you, either. They are all important parts of discipleship, but I know people that exhaust themselves in good

behavior or in good works, and they're still just as mean or immature as they were before.

What we need is a reality check about how spiritual growth really happens.

Peter's Example

The apostle Peter is an excellent example for radical life change. Remember when you first met him in the gospels? He was outspoken, at times foolish, and sometimes weak in his faith. Later in the book of Acts, old things had passed away and Peter had been transformed into a powerful preacher and leader of the early church. He had changed. His commitment and devotion to Christ had become so strong that he never looked back—even to the point of death.

It's from Peter's testimony and instruction that we can learn what is absolutely essential to flourishing in our faith in Christ and being changed by the gospel.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

If I were to ask you the simple question – Do you believe the Bible is all one needs for salvation and spiritual growth? You would probably agree. In other words, do you believe the Scriptures are sufficient?

To take this issue a step further, would you use the word “exclusive” to identify your view of the Scripture's resources for salvation and spiritual growth? In other words are you convinced of the Bible's sufficiency to the exclusion of every other possible available and competing resource?

There is a battle going on today. The essence or nature of the battle is the belief that either the Bible is not enough or that there are other sources to draw on for mankind's needs, or a combination of both. The upshot of this battle is that, the Bible, God's Word to man, is somehow lacking or defi-

cient in supplying what man needs for all of life and growth in godliness!

The Word of God is Key!

Think about your own story. You began the Christian life with a message about the Cross; it came out of the Scriptures and into your heart. That's how it started; and that's how you keep it going.

Consider 1 Peter 1:23: "...since you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God."

The Word of God is a living message. Hebrews 4:12 describes it: "The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is a discernor of the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Has this ever been your experience? As we hear God's Word being taught, we often wonder, "How does the preacher know that about my life?" Actually, that's not the preacher, that's the Word of God. It is living and active! It can make such an impact in your life. The Word of God is the tool of choice God uses in your transformation.

Is the Word of God challenging you? Maybe you're in a bit of a spiritual desert right now. Are you wondering why the things of God that used to be so dear to you have become a little cold or dry? You used to be like a waterfall, with trees and flowers growing around, and now in that place there are just a lot of dry tumbleweeds blowing. Have you ever wondered, what has happened to my heart?

We've been to that place at times in each of our lives, and as hard as is for us to admit it, we went there by choice. I have never in my life picked up the Word of God, with the phone unplugged and the door shut, and given it my focus

and my faith in a diligent way when it has not fed me and grown in me a new vitality for God.

If you're dry spiritually, you know what's going on. You need to get back into the Bible. The most vibrant Christians I know are people who are often, regularly, diligently feeding themselves on God's book.

Back to the Basics: God's Word

So, back to our original question, How does a person grow up in Christ? Answer: By getting back to where you started from—allowing God's Word to change you. I guarantee you that the life of Christ will be formed in you as you feed faithfully on the living, active Word of God.

The Cocoon

When we come to know Christ we are so excited about freedom – we are no longer enslaved to sin as we were before Christ. One thing we didn't count on: God is going to use suffering to transform us.

God wants to use the “cocoon” of suffering, pressure and testing to get the “worminess” of sinful habits and desires out of our hearts so that we can be conformed to the image of Christ. Listen to the truth of James 1:2-4, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

Often we want to cut our time in the cocoon short. Instead of wanting to please God in the time of pain and pressure, we want to:

- change our circumstances
- change the people around us

- check out and “veg” via social media, entertainment, etc.

Christ Learned Obedience Through Suffering

2 Corinthians 13:4 says that Christ “was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him...” We are called to live in the cocoon, which is a place of weakness and vulnerability. Following Christ means being weak and vulnerable. Hebrews 5:8 teaches us something just as breathtaking: “Though a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered” (HCSB). Christ submitted to the grueling task of being human. It was tedious and tasteless and tiring. He was harassed and harangued by the devil. Could he get out of it? Even at the end of His life he would say, “Not my will but yours be done”.

You Will Be Tested

As soon as you become a child of God, you are going to be nailed to a cross of testing just like our Savior. Paul said in Philippians 1:29-30, “it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, 30 engaged in the same conflict” – the conflict that Paul went through, that our Lord went through – the same enemy. Be ready. Don’t be taken off guard!

Tested and Tried

You will be tempted by the wicked one. Remember the words of Jesus in John 13:16, “Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master...” If He was tempted, you will also be tempted. Our Lord told Peter in Luke 22:31 “Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat”. Christ goes on to say: “but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.” And Satan has demanded to have

you if you are a child of God. He already has the lost. But he wants to vex you like he vexed Job. He mocks your faith and demands to prove it to see if Christ has truly begun a good work in you.

Obedience in the Storm

God asks us to trust Him in the storm. You are going to suffer. Just as Christ learned obedience through suffering, so must we. We can ask God to remove the suffering, but we must continue to trust God if He leaves us in the storm! In fact we should rejoice in the storm.

Joyful in the Storm

Consider James 1:2–3: “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” Are you able to trust God in the storm? Do you get bitter? Christ could have used His divine position to alleviate His suffering during His temptation by Satan in the wilderness, but He chose not to! He would not put God to the test. That would be sinful. He came to serve His Father and to do His will. So we are called to do the same. Are you able to trust God in the storm?

It is in the storm, the cocoon, the cross, the place of crisis, that we see the greatest change taking place in us.

The Way of Escape

All of us face temptation. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all our trials and sinful tendencies went away? Always remember there is always a way out of temptation. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he

will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

Christ is the one who shows us what that way of escape is in His temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Jesus is the only human being that has victoriously overcome the wicked one. Therefore we can always have victory over sin and sinful habits by running to Christ as our refuge.

Keratoconus – Blind Spots in our Lives

I remember when I first learned I had an eye disease called Keratoconus. I couldn't see the street signs. I would be going some place. I had directions. But I couldn't see clearly. I remember before I got it corrected somewhat that I would pull over to the side of the road and actually walk up to the street sign to see it.

I know what you are thinking! That's dangerous! And you are right! But how much *more* dangerous is it to live life in a careless, darkened, blind manner? Yet we all have “blind spots” in our lives. We don't want to admit it, but there is still a lot of “worminess” in us that the pressure in the cocoon brings out.

Remnants of the Old Life

You see, the *remnants* of the old life are still present in you in your flesh. Paul said “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). Walt Kelly during the Korean War had a cartoon character that said some famous words in 1952, “We have met the enemy and he is us.” Your greatest enemy is *you*!!

Paul identified where his greatest battle took place in Romans 7:21, “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, *evil is present with me*. A few verse later, Paul named his enemy again: “O wretched man that I am” (Romans 7:24). Our

greatest enemy is our ourselves! That's his whole point in Romans 7.

Therefore, we must understand that our greatest battle is against ourselves! *John Owen* said, "The old man is nailed to the cross, he struggles, strives, and cries out with great strength". *Abraham Kueyper* said, "God's child remains the old man's grave digger until the hour of his own departure."

The Renewal of the Mind

Every decision you make, every thought you think is taking you somewhere! We need to wake up! We need to pay attention! Your steps are taking you somewhere! Your only hope is to have the *mind* of Christ guiding you on a daily basis. Paul talks about this very thing in Ephesians 4, where he calls it: being "renewed in the spirit of your mind". Paul says, "put off the old life and put on the new". This means we need to get rid of sinful habits by getting rid of selfish, sinful, or erroneous thinking about everything. We must not trust in our own heart which is "deceitful and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9)

Hard Work of Mind Renewal

What ever is in your mind will come out of your life. If we have the mind of Christ, we will have a life of Christlikeness! Now this is something that we are called to put all our effort into! It is something will use up every ounce of energy and will take the rest of your life. In other words, being a genuine Christian is *hard work*! All of your energy and focus should be put what our text calls "renewing your mind" to be like Jesus Christ.

Someone once said, "Either sin will keep you from the Bible or the Bible will keep you from sin." I heard someone else say, "A Bible that is falling apart usually is held by a per-

son whose life is *not* falling apart”. The hard work of mind renewal is worth it!

Responding to God’s Word

Jesus asked in Luke 6:46, “why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Simply listening to the Word of God is not enough. We must respond in obedience. We must be submitted to Christ.

In other words, we must practice what we hear. “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”. You can give great diligence to hearing the Word of God, but until you practice it, you are deceived to think it does you any good at all. Romans 2:13 tells us that “not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”

If God gives you a car or a home or a million dollars you should use it for his glory, not waste it. It is the same with the Word of God. “For whoever is given much, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48).

If you are a saved person, you will be bearing the fruit of responding always to God’s Word, submitting to it, letting the Lord have His way always in your life. I’m not making this up. Jesus Himself said, speaking of the Last Judgment in Matthew 7:21, “Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *does* the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

In the Psalm 1 when David describes the “blessed man” he says in verse 3, that the blessed man would be *fruitful*, “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he *does* shall prosper.”

You can be emotionally moved by the Word of God. You can listen to a sermon every day of your life preached by Paul

or an angel from heaven, but listening is not why we are hear. We want to respond to God's Word. That's the way of fruitfulness. Every time you respond in obedience you bear fruit. Under the pressures and in the pains of life, we must learn obedience like our Lord did.

It's Your Choice

The only one that is responsible for your change is you. You can choose who you want to serve. Consider the example of Moses: "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward" (Hebrews. 11:24-26). What will you choose?

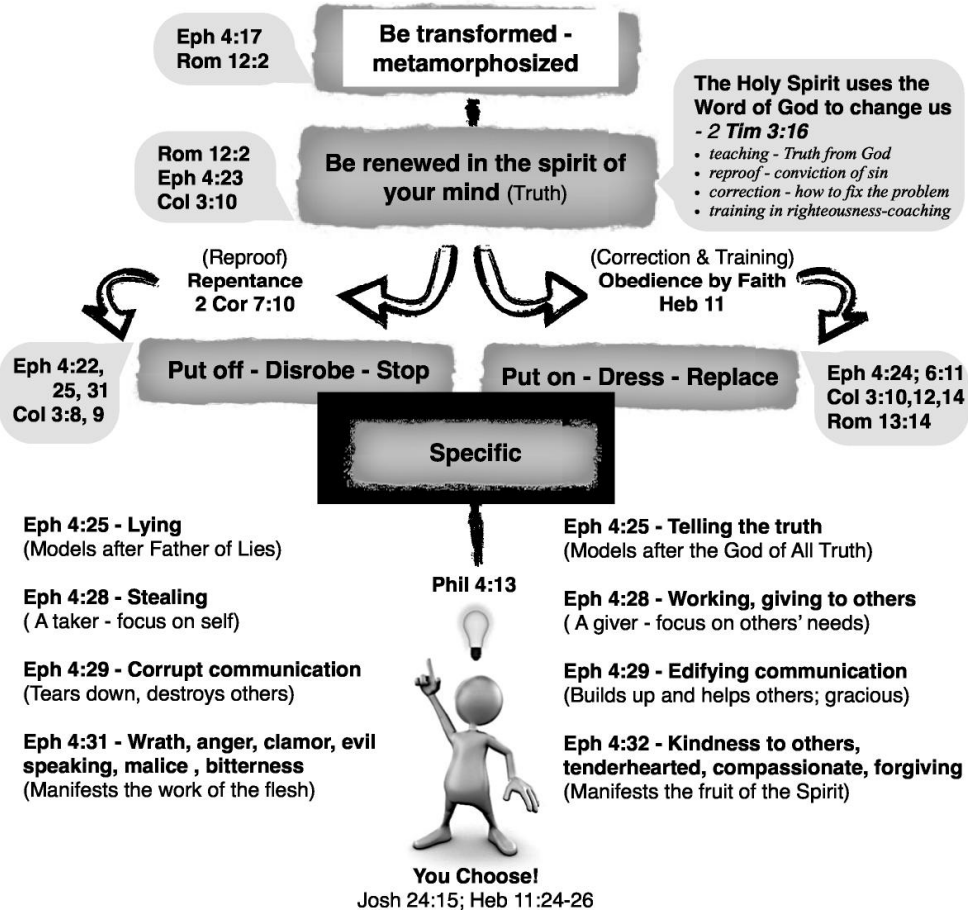
HOMEWORK

1. Choose a yearly Bible reading plan and list at least one person that can keep you accountable with your reading (in addition to your spouse).

Change Model Diagram



A Command to Change!



4 | how to change

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence...

2 PETER 1:3

Second Peter 1:3-4 proclaims the sufficiency of Scripture; we have everything we need to live a godly life the Holy Spirit living in us with divine power, and the written Word that teaches us how to be like Christ and to escape sinful lifestyles.

The next three verses give us eight qualities to follow as we pursue maturity Verse 10 promises that if we practice these eight qualities, we will never fall back into our sinful and painful lifestyles. These qualities are to be blended or chorused together, moving progressively like a stairway toward Christlikeness. If these qualities are ours and are increasing, they keep us from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we lack these qualities, we forget that we have been cleansed from our past. So, what are these eight qualities?

The Foundation

The first three qualities: faith, virtue and knowledge, lay a foundation for change. Without a faith commitment to Christ and a desire to please Him, we cannot change.

1 – Faith

Faith is believing the Word of God and acting upon it, no matter how I feel, because God promises a good result. We need faith both for salvation (Ro 1:16,17) and for obedient living (Heb 11). Faith is foundational to a godly life without faith, it is impossible to please God. Faith is a commitment to obey Christ, no matter what.

2 – Virtue

Virtue, that desire for moral excellence that makes us want to be more like Jesus, must be added to our faith for a strong foundation. Virtue is the desire to please Christ, no matter what.

3 – Knowledge

Knowledge completes the foundation, for without knowing the Word of God, we wouldn't know how to obey Christ even if we had the desire to obey! These first three qualities must work together to provide a strong foundation for our growth and maturity in Christ.

The Hard Work

Once the foundation is laid, there is a lot of hard work to build the next two qualities of self-control and perseverance.

4 – Self-control

Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) that results from obedience to Christ. It requires a lot of hard work to build on the foundation, but the Holy Spirit assists us in developing self-control, which is really submitting ourselves to Him to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. We can't do it alone - it requires cooperation!

5 – Perseverance

Perseverance is a steadfastness that allows us to develop that self-control (1 Co 15:58). Often in counseling I define perseverance as clinging to Jesus with all our might and continuing to hang on as long as it takes to be victorious. Self-control and perseverance are the "Hard Work" of the sanctification process. They must work together to produce results.

The Payoff

Once the foundation is laid and applying the daily hard work of spiritual disciplines to your life, there is a payoff that results in the last three qualities: godliness, brotherly affection, and love.

6 – Godliness

Godliness is habitually responding in a Christlike way (1Ti 4:7-16). It is the fruit of laying the strong foundation of faith, virtue, and knowledge and then doing the hard work of self-control and perseverance. As we learn and grow in the Lord, and persist in forming new and godly habits, we respond more consistently in reflecting God's character. Godliness is acting like Jesus as He lives in and through us.

7 – Brotherly Affection

Brotherly affection is being kind one to another. We taught our children to use their best manners with each other, treating each other with kindness and respect (Lk 6:31). They are still affectionate as adults. Christlike character and godly habits always affect the way we treat each other; we should be characterized by brotherly affection.

8 – Love

Love is the agape motivation that is our ultimate goal as believers Jn 15:12-13). We are to love God and one another as God loves us (1Jn 3:14-18). This proves God's love is really in us and that we have truly become like He is, for He is love (1Jn 4:8).

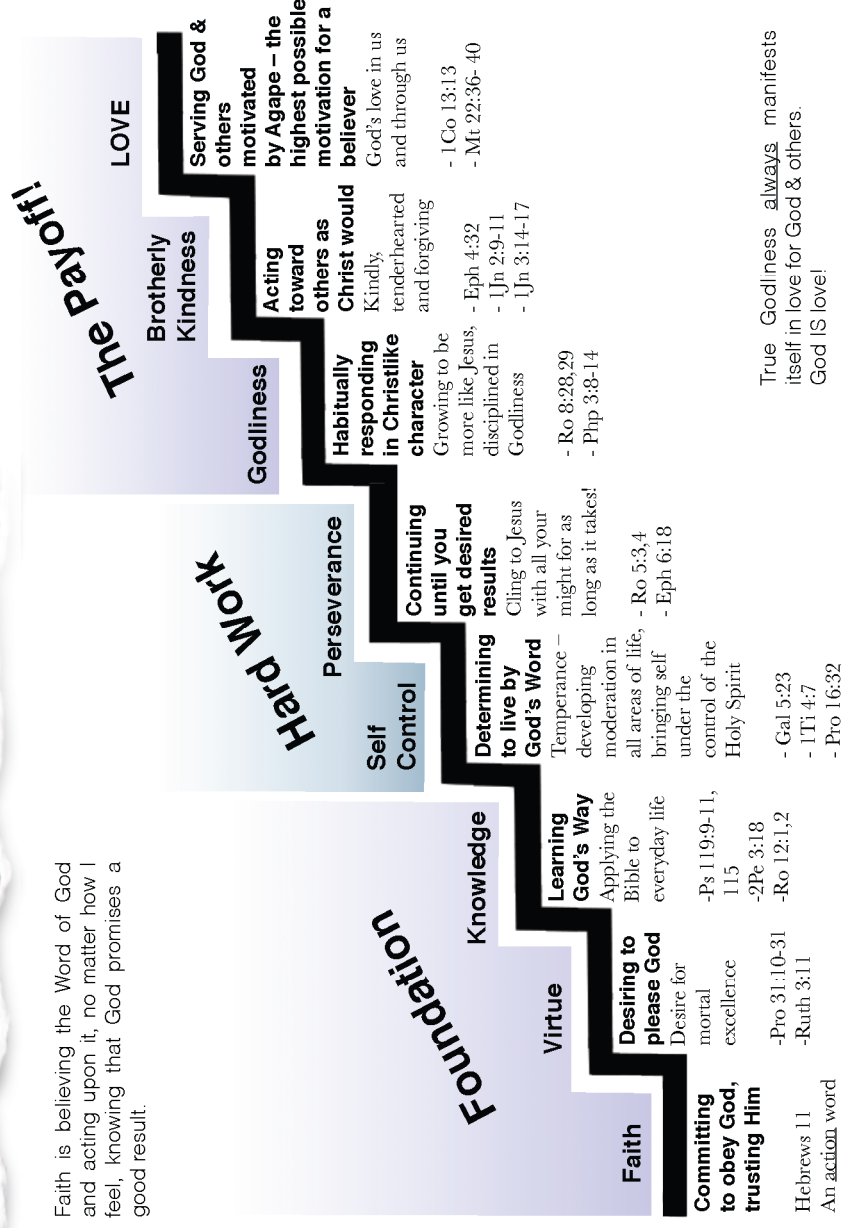
If we lay the right foundation (faith, virtue, and knowledge) and then continue in the hard work required to become godly (self-control and perseverance), the pay off (godliness, brotherly affection, and love) will surely come. We are to not become weary in doing what is right (Gal 6:9). He promises us in 2 Peter 1:10 that if we diligently live out these eight qualities we will never stumble! Let us be diligent to make progress on this stairway for sanctification.

HOMEWORK

1. Look at the chart on the following page, and list the areas you struggle with. Where do you think you are in the process of progressive sanctification?

Sanctification Process - 2Pet 1:3-10

Faith is believing the Word of God and acting upon it, no matter how I feel, knowing that God promises a good result.



5 | love is the goal

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

EPHESIANS 5:25

The Bible plainly says the man is the head of his home. What does that mean? It can seem very intimidating and even unfair for a married couple. Does it mean that the man gets to make all the decisions? Does it mean that the woman must do every thing her husband says? What does it mean? When you see the biblical picture of headship, you will be amazed and thankful for God's order of creation in marriage. The biblical equation of headship looks something like this:

HEADSHIP = LOVE

Immediately we see that there is confusion about headship. Ask the average man what headship means to them, and he will suggest words like: power, authority, control, or leadership. The Bible uses a different word to describe headship: love! You will exercise your leadership, authority, etc., through your love. Strip authority of love and you have a monster. *Raw power is tyranny.*

To be the "head" of the home is not a relationship of *superiority*. It is actually using your position to love, build, and nurture a relationship of deep sacrifice with your wife. Hus-

bands are to demonstrate their headship by sacrificing themselves for the wife.

With that in mind, notice our text does not say “Husbands rule over your wives, command them, demonstrate your authority over them and command them around.” It says, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”. Give your self up for your wife. So now we have to ask ourselves the question. What is agape love?

What Love is Not

First let us look at what it is not. Agape love is not mere **emotion**. Love, as God defines it, is not primarily an emotion. The world says, “when the feeling stops, the love is over.” Love is not a tingly sensation. Love is not sentimentalism. Love has nothing to do with how you feel. God so loved the world that he gave His only Son. He didn’t look at the world and say, “I just can’t resist them; I’ve got to get them in heaven. They’re terrific.” There wasn’t one thing in us that was deserving. We were enemies; we hated God; we were sinful and vile, but God loved us anyway. And He loved us so much, he gave Himself.

Agape love is not mere **appreciation**. It is not just saying nice words to someone. Proverbs 27:6 — “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” Love is more than empty words. Love is action. Love is an act of your will that chooses the best for the other person. We can say all kinds of nice things to a person and it not help them. Sometimes love is saying very hard words to a person.

Agape love is not **admiration**. It is not simply liking or being fond of someone. Agape love goes far beyond admiration. It sacrifices for those that are not admirable.

Love: a Reflection of God

We read in our Bible that “God is love.” Jesus is the exact imprint of God’s love. By looking at the cross we can say that agape love is a voluntary abandonment of self-preservation for the good of another. Husbands, use your position of authority to sacrifice your life for your wife.

Agape love is a **God-centered** love. Understand the Bible makes a shocking statement like: “God is agape”. 1 John 4:16 — “So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

You cannot truly love your wife as you ought without being born again. This kind of selfless love is impossible simply through the human nature. You must have the divine nature dwelling in you. God must dwell in you. It is a God-centered love. Agape love is a voluntary act of the will. “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...” (**John 3:16**).

I’ve heard men say about their wife—“I just don’t love her any more”. Well, then choose to love her. You’ve stopped abandoning yourself for the good of your wife. Start anew right now.

The Greatest Demonstration of Love

The demonstration of a husband’s love ought to mirror Christ’s act of sacrifice on the cross for His Bride. Over and over in the New Testament, the apostolic demonstration of love is the cross.

1 John 3:16 — “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” This is how we come to understand the love of God—look at the gruesome picture of Calvary. Look at the Son of God writhing there in unimaginable pain. The One

who knew no sin, the Lamb who is worthy of all glory, writhing in pain. Men, demonstrate that to your wife.

But you say, “She doesn’t deserve my love. You have no idea how she’s been toward me. Remember that Christ’s love was given to people who had not merited it, who did not deserve it, who did nothing to earn it, in whom there was nothing that compelled Him to love them.

Romans 5:8 — “but God shows [demonstrates] his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Christ gave own spotless life for the most unworthy and rotten people. This is LOVE. The word Paul uses is agape. Christ died for those who spit upon Him, who ridiculed Him, and who hated Him.

How Do We Practice Biblical Headship?

Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”. You say great. This is an impossible command. This is like telling me to jump over the moon. How can I love like Christ?

This command cannot be obeyed by the husband without the supernatural power of God’s grace. The husband has an absolute necessity of God’s grace. He must be born again to fulfill this command. The way to change your marriage is not by changing your wife. It is by changing yourself. God must change you. You must be a born again man. Without grace, you cannot have the marriage God would have for you. Without the God who is love dwelling in you, you cannot truly love anyone.

Understand the love you are called to takes supernatural grace. God does not call us to love our wives when they treat us well. That’s not Christlike love. **The person we are called to love is the one nailing us to the cross!** “Hus-

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

You must know how to **practice** biblical love. We see this in Corinthians 13. A sure sign that you are not practicing biblical love in your marriage is that there are walls of bitterness there.

Husband, does your wife listen to you? If the answer is no, then you are probably not demonstrating love to her in a way she understands. There may be walls of bitterness in your marriage that need to be torn down.

Listen to how Paul describes the importance of love: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” In Paul’s day, in the worship of Cybele and Dionysus, two pagan false gods, there was speaking in ecstatic languages accompanied by “clanging cymbals, smashing gongs, and blaring trumpets”¹ What Paul seems to be saying is, no matter how eloquent you are, if you do not have love in your life and your walk with Christ, you are no different than pagans.

The 16 Attributes of Love

Paul gives fourteen biblical attributes of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8a — “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

¹ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 131.

1 – Love is Patient

Love is patient. “Love is patient” (vs. 1). The KJV says, “Charity suffereth long” (verse 4). Long suffering is the ability to control anger or frustration. The word translated patient here is *makrothumia*. It means “long-tempered” and is the exact opposite of our expression “short-fused.” Patience is how love *reacts* in order to minimize a negative situation. Husbands, when you don’t get what you want, how do you react? A lack of patience will turn your home into a war zone. Patience waits and never gives in to sinful anger. Patience waits for a godly outcome.

The opposite of patience is a short fuse. Often when we are hurting in a marriage we want to say something hurtful back.

You must choose to be patient. You must choose to put aside feelings of anger and bitterness and pride. If you do not have patient love, you will over react and you will act foolish and angry. You will regret it.

Choose to patiently put aside sinful anger. Choose to patiently deal with the problem. Sinful anger never makes the situation better. It creates new wrongs and new hurts and new problems. Love suffers long with those feelings of anger without acting on them.

Proverbs 14.29, “He that is slow to wrath [anger] is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit [quick-tempered] exalteth folly.”

Consider our Lord as an example of perfect patience. While the Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross, after He had endured all that He had endured, He said this about His killers: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34a). Christ could have cursed his killers on the cross, but instead he blessed them when they hurt Him. He asked His Father not to hold this against them.

2 – Love is Kind & Giving

Love is kind. “...is kind” (verse 4). The word kind is translated from a Greek word (*chresteuomai*) that means to be useful or profitable, to furnish what is needed. To be kind is to make life easier for the other person.

This kind of love looks for ways to make life easier for another by giving...

- a helping hand
- a kind note or call
- a word of encouragement
- a significant amount of time and attention

Kindness is love in action. The opposite of kindness is harshness and a suspicious spirit. Kindness on the other hand introduces positives into all situations. Kindness is “the sympathetic kindliness or sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease, and shrinks from giving pain”.² Kindness thinks far more of others than of self. Kindness can be broken down into four categories: gentleness, helpfulness, willingness, and initiative.

Gentleness. Kindness leads you to be very sensitive about being unnecessarily harsh. You are sensitive, tender. Even if you say hard things you are careful to bend over backwards to make your words as easy as possible to hear.

Helpfulness. Kindness means you are always looking around to meet the needs of the moment. You come into a dirty, disorganized house, and instead of yelling about how it ought to be, you say nothing and simply start doing the dishes, helping with the laundry, pick up a screaming child, using your words of love to calm the situation. *Kindness means you put your needs on hold to meet the needs of others.*

Willingness. Kindness inspires you to be agreeable. Instead of being obstinate, stubborn, always right and self-

² Ibid., 256.

righteous, you want to cooperate. You are totally pliable and flexible and willing to help. A kind husband ends a thousand potential arguments by his willingness to listen and not demand his way.

Initiative. Kindness thinks ahead and takes the first step. Kind love is always thinking of others. A kind husband will not have to be coerced off the couch to help set the table. No the kind husband thinks ahead and is already setting the table and filling the glasses before being asked. A kind husband helps put the house back in order after company. A kind husband will help get the children ready for church or ready for bed without the wife having to ask. A kind husband will take the initiative!

3 – Love is Not Selfish

Love does not envy (verse 4). Envy is pure selfishness. James 3 says if you have selfishness in your life, it will produce “disorder and every vile practice.”

It means you wish the good things happening to another were happening to you. It means you think you are better than your wife. The Bible forbids any Christian for having this attitude, especially husbands toward their wives. Paul says in Philippians 2:3 — “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

To love means you won’t be grieved at any blessings of another person, their wealth, gifts, qualities or status. Love means you want the very best for your wife. You do everything you can to help her succeed.

Are you selfish and envious in your marriage, men? Do you put your desires and interests above your spouses? Love puts selfishness to death. Love wants the other person to succeed. Husbands, love your wife. Do not envy the fact that

she does not have life as hard as you. The truth is she may have it much harder. And even if she doesn't, you should not be upset. That's envy. That's not love.

The opposite of envy is selflessness. It means you will sacrifice so that your wife can succeed. She wants to succeed in little things. It may mean you start putting the children to bed so she can get to bed before 3am! It may mean that you come home from work earlier to help her prepare for a big day of company.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I want my wife to succeed in the home?
- Do I want her to feel loved by me?
- Does my wife see me as looking out for myself first?

Instead of being envious and selfish, write your wife a love note telling her you were thinking about her. For those who are unmarried, choose someone from the congregation that you want to encourage. Instead of thinking they have it easier than you, find something they might be struggling with, and encourage them with a note.

4 – Love Does Not Boast

"I've got it all figured out." Love never says that. Love does not brag or boast. The idea is literally to "parade oneself". Have you ever been in a difficult discussion with your spouse, and when you were in a corner, you began to paint yourself as the most spiritual person on the planet? You say things like: "I would never do that!" That is not love. That is selfishness.

To boast means to be "rash in bragging about one's own excellences or endowments" (Barnes). This attitude of vaunting comes from the attitude of *superiority* over others; It is

usually combined with a feeling of contempt or disregard for your wife.

When we are offended we act as if we have never done the same thing. How should we respond when we are offended? To love by closing your mouth and being very careful what you say. Say with David, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3).

Listen to the words of Paul in **Ephesians 4:29–32** — “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Let me paraphrase it for you: **Ephesians 4:31** “Let all manner of bitterness, and rage, and grudges, and raising of your voice, and misrepresentation, be taken off of you and thrown in a garbage heap, with all thoughts of evil towards others”. Sanitize your self from these six evils. These are the filthy rags of the old man. Put them off, and throw them far, far away from you in the garbage heap.

Stop boasting and having a superior attitude against your spouse and be tender and forgiving “even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.”

5 – Love is Humble

Love is **not** “**arrogant**” or literally “puffed up” or arrogant (**verse 5**). True love means you have a very low view of yourself. To love means not to overvalue yourself by concentrating on your achievements, your respect and position, your abilities and gifts. You realize everything you have is a

gift from God. “To whom much is given much will be required”. To love means you do not compare yourself with others to try and show yourself to be better than they are.

6 – Love is Not Rude

Love is not **rude** (**verse 5**). Rudeness is characterized by irritability. It’s when you are under pressure and you turn sour. Some people seem to have the motto, “Never pass up an opportunity to get upset with your spouse”. To be irritable means to “be near the point of a knife”. Are you the kind of a person that is always feeling poked by a situation. Rude people are those who are always locked and loaded and ready to overreact.

Rudeness really is the way a person acts when they have no care for the person around them. Love is careful to act appropriately. Under pressure, love acts appropriately. Love does not turn sour.

Rudeness is like a destructive storm waiting to happen. It tramples over people and has no care what destruction it leaves in its path.

When tough circumstances come, often we want to take out our tiredness on other people. We may be hurting inside, and we want to release on others. We need to take it to the prayer closet. When war is raging in your heart, confine the storm to yourself, and do not act rudely to others, especially your wife.

7 – Love is the First to Give In

Love does not seek its own way (1 Corinthians 13:5-“It does not insist on its own way”). The man who is concerned with getting all he can from his wife is not loving. If you are concerned with only what you can GET from your wife, you are sowing the seeds of destruction for your marriage.

Remember Christ loves you, not because of anything you can give to Him, but because of what He can give to you. You cannot help Christ in any way. He loves to bestow favor on you that you do not deserve. He got nothing out of it but helping you. That's love.

8 – Love is Not Touchy

Love is not easily offended “is not irritable” (verse 5). The idea here is that love is not easily injured or offended. Psalm 119:165 — “Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.” Lit, “In nothing they will be offended”.

Most marriages are in turmoil not because of BIG things, but because of little tiny things that drive us crazy. Those little things that offend us are a sign that we are very self centered. Love is not this way. Love is selfless.

Are you easily offended? Do you go off at little things? Jesus endured a cross because he loved the church. He endured the mocking, the crown of thorns. Do you love your wife. Come what may, when you love like God loves you will not be so easily offended.

9 – Love Keeps No Record of Wrongs

Love is not resentful. It keeps no record of wrongs suffered (1 Corinthians 13:5). 1 Peter 4:8 — “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” If you have kept a record of wrongs, it means that you are not loving. To forgive means never to bring it up again. It is a true sign of love to forgive as Jesus told us to – seventy times seven!

10 – Love Doesn't Hold Grudges or Clam Up

Love does not rejoice in or bring up former wrongdoing. Love does not take no pleasure in iniquity. When our spouse falls into sin, we must grieve with them. When we love someone we cannot rejoice at their sins or the consequences of sin, but we are grieved at them. We want to help them and restore them.

Husbands, consider Galatians 6:1-3—concerning your wife, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” Restore your wife.

What we are tempted to do with faults is to store them up and use them in a time of war. Instead of rejoicing in iniquity, seek to help your spouse reconcile. If she asks for forgiveness, forgive her immediately.

What is forgiveness? Forgiveness is not so much about forgetting. We hear the phrase “forgive and forget”. Well, there are some things we have a hard time forgetting. And even though God forgives us, he chooses to put those sins in the sea of His forgetfulness. In other words, to forgive is to *choose never to bring up the offence ever again*.

This does not mean that we ignore sin. If your wife sins against you, you should deal with the problem. Go after the problem, not the person. Love your wife, and deal with the sin. Consider Matthew 18:15 — “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone”. Then when forgiveness is granted, you never have the right to bring up the offense ever again.

11 – Love Focuses on the Positive

Love rejoices with the truth. The idea is rejoicing in spiritual victories when one is walking in the truth (Gill). It is so important to deal truthfully. There are things in your marriage that you need to work out biblically, but you must be honest and rejoice in truth.

Many arguments begin because of a wrong idea of what your wife is saying. She says something, and you are totally offended because you think the worst. She is offended because you thought something so evil of her. And so the cycle goes. You must deal with your marriage with honesty. Ask your spouse to repeat what was said, then REPEAT it back. Ask her “Is this what you said?” And she’ll say, “No, of course I do not meant that”. Well, what do you mean...etc. If something is wrong in the marriage, you must be careful to establish the truth.

Often bitterness arises in the heart because we do not seek out the truth. Truly, much of what separates people in marriage is not even true! It is imagined faults. Love rejoices in the truth.

12 – Love Listens

Love bears with, or “covers” all things. The idea is that love protects. Paul uses the word “cherish” for this idea in Ephesians 5:28–29 — “ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church”. Husbands are to cherish their wives.

When you hit your thumb with a hammer, you feel the pain, and you do all you can to relieve it. Do you do that for your wife? Do you know when she is hurting? Do you protect her?

1 Peter 3:7 has this idea of protection, “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” Three ways to protect your wife are listed in this verse.

Concern. You are to learn about your wife. Find out what hurts her and protect her from it. Have lots of conversations with her. Get to know her. You are the initiator.

Courtesy. You are to treat your wife as a weaker vessel or a “fragile vase”. This means you show honor. She is a precious treasure.

Care. She is a fragile vase. She is emotionally more sensitive than you for the most part. Protect her! Do not tear her down. *You can win the argument and destroy your wife! Don't do it.*

13 – Love Assumes & Thinks the Best

Love believes all things. Love believes the best of people. Remember when you were first courting your wife? You thought she could do no wrong. She had deficiencies then, but back then you thought they were “cute”. You loved her. You thought the best of her.

When things are going great in marriage all the deficiencies of your wife are forgotten, they are covered, but when things are hard, you fill in any blank spaces with further negatives. Focus on the positives of your wife. Give her the benefit of the doubt. Fill in the unknowns with positives.

Never, never, never speak ill of your wife in front of others. Speak about her as if she were there. Constantly rehearse in your mind the things that you are thankful about for her.

14 – Love Hopes for the Best

Love hopes all things. Love hopes for the best. Love fills in the blanks of life with good. It never thinks the worst, but always hopes and expects the best about a person when there is any question.

This could be translated as follows: “Love is always hopeful” or “Love hopes under all circumstances”. Love doesn’t write “hopeless” over anyone or any circumstances.

This biblical optimism grows out of faith in God, not men. Hope is the joyous anticipation of good to come. This hope in God must be woven into the practical fabric of our lives.

Hope is not anchored in having things your way, thinking you can bargain with or manipulate God to act on what you think is in your best interest.

Hope is attached to God Himself to do what is right, good and best for all and knowing that He will give sufficient grace to handle any situation that His plan has for you. It is hope in Him that He will bring about what is good, right, fair, etc. in every one and all situations.

15 – Love Sticks with Imperfect People

Love “endures all things” (verse 7). Consider the definition of the Greek word (hupomeno 5278) translated **endure** is a military term used of an army holding a vital position at all costs. This could be translated as follows:

- “Love is ever patient”
- “Love endures without limit”
- “Love gives us power to endure everything”

Battles have been won because a small pocket of men refused to quit and run. It means to remain under – that is to endure or sustain a load of miseries, adversities, persecutions or provocations in faith and patience.

“All things” – every sort of offense, pressure, affliction, difficulty, victory, defeat etc. Love endures! It eliminates attitudes such as:

- I can’t take it anymore.
- Things have got to ease up.
- If things don’t change, I’ll crack.

Your love for God and others, energized by God within you (Phil. 2:13), is the source and strength for endurance. Only theology can change this. Knowing God and His love and care for you. How is your endurance seen in your home? at work? Etc.

Consider some biblical examples of endurance.

Job endured. Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

Paul endured. 2 Tim. 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Jesus Christ endured. Heb. 12:2,3 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

16 – Love Bears Eternal Fruit

Love never ends or fails (verse 8). Love bears eternal fruit and brings eternal rewards. Love always prospers! May God use this simple study to change your life as you raise your commitment to love God and your wife biblically.

CONCLUSION

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church! 1 John 3:16, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” The one closest to us is the one we should lay our life down for.

Marriage is a temporary institution. There is no marriage in heaven. Marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. Determine to demonstrate Christ’s love for the church to your wife.

HOMEWORK

1. List the attributes of love that you most struggle with.

2. Fill out the worksheets on “Expressing Love”.

Ways a Wife May Express Love to Her Husband

(How to Convince Your Husband That You Love Him)

Evaluate the way you express love to your husband. Go over the list and circle the ways you are neglecting. Ask your husband to go over the list and put a check mark in front of the ways he would like you to express love. Ask him to add other things to the list. You may express love to your husband by:

1. ☐ Greeting him at the door when he comes home with a smile, a hug, a kiss, and an, "Am I glad to see you. I really missed you today."
2. ☐ Having a cup of coffee or tea ready for him when he comes home.
3. ☐ Giving him a lingering kiss.
4. ☐ Letting him know you like to be with him and making arrangements so that you can spend time with him without giving the impression that you really should or would rather be doing something else.
5. ☐ Being willing to talk to him about his concerns and not belittling him for having these concerns.
6. ☐ Supporting him and cooperating with him enthusiastically and positively when he has made a decision.
7. ☐ Teasing and flirting with him.
8. ☐ Seeking to arouse him and sometimes being the aggressor or leader in sex relations.
9. ☐ Asking him to have sex relations more than he would expect you to.

10. ☐ Really letting yourself go when having sexual relations.
11. ☐ Caressing him.
12. ☐ Looking at him with an adoring expression.
13. ☐ Sitting close to him.
14. ☐ Holding his hand.
15. ☐ Rubbing his back or... _____
16. ☐ Wearing his favorite nightgown or dress or perfume or... .
17. ☐ Expressing your love in words or notes.
18. ☐ Letting him know how much you appreciate him and what you appreciate about him. Do this often and for things 'that are sometimes taken for granted.
19. ☐ Pretend you are trying to convince him you think he is great and very important to you.
20. ☐ Frequently fulfilling his wishes and desires as well as the specific requests he makes of you. Try to anticipate what he might desire or wish and surprise him by doing it before he asks.
21. ☐ Playing with him (tennis, golf, party games, etc.); sharing his hobbies and interests.
22. ☐ Enthusiastically cooperating with him and sharing with him in devotions and prayer; seeking to set a good example to the children concerning their attitude toward devotions and prayer.
23. ☐ Maintaining your own spiritual life through regular Bible study and prayer.
24. ☐ Handling your affairs decently and in order; structuring your time and using it wisely.

- 25. ☐ Being willing to face and solve problems even if it requires discomfort, change, and much effort.
- 26. ☐ Fulfilling your responsibilities.
- 27. ☐ Asking him for his advice and frequently following it.
- 28. ☐ Being ready to leave at the appointed time.
- 29. ☐ Standing with him and supporting him in his attempts to raise your children for God.
- 30. ☐ Thanking him in creative ways for his attempts to please you.
- 31. ☐ Asking for forgiveness and saying, "I was wrong and will try to change."
- 32. ☐ Actually changing where you should.
- 33. ☐ Working with him on his projects or... .
- 34. ☐ Reading the literature he asks you to read and sharing your insights.
- 35. ☐ Letting him know when he has tough decisions to make (and even when they are not so tough) that you really believe he will choose the right thing and that you will wholeheartedly support him in whatever decision he makes, provided the decision does not violate clearly revealed biblical principle; being his best cheerleader and fan club.
- 36. ☐ Buying gifts for him.
- 37. ☐ Watching football or other sporting events with him and trying to really manifest an interest.
- 38. ☐ Keeping the house neat and clean.
- 39. ☐ Cooking creatively and faithfully.
- 40. ☐ Having devotions with the children when he is not able to be there.

- 41. ☐ Maintaining his disciplinary rules when he is not present.
- 42. ☐ Being appreciative and cooperative when he holds you, caresses or kisses you.
- 43. ☐ Lovingly giving him your input when you think he is in error.
- 44. ☐ Offering constructive suggestions when you think he could improve or become more productive. Don't push or preach or do this in such a way that you belittle him, but seek positive and non-threatening ways to help him become more fully the man God wants him to be.
- 45. ☐ Running errands gladly.
- 46. ☐ Seeking to complete, not compete with, him; being the best member of his team and seeking to convince him that you are just that.
- 47. ☐ Being lovingly honest with him-no back door messages-no withholding of truth that will hinder your relationship or future trust and closeness.
- 48. ☐ Being willing to see things from his point of view; putting the best interpretation on what he does or says until you have evidence that proves the contrary.
- 49. ☐ Pampering him and making a fuss over him.
- 50. ☐ Being happy and cheerful.
- 51. ☐ Refusing to nag.
- 52. ☐ Gently brushing, a leg under the table.
- 53. ☐ Having candlelight and music at dinner.
- 54. ☐ Indicating you want to be alone with him and talk or just lie in each other's arms.
- 55. ☐ Giving an "I promise you" wink.

- 56. ☐ Going for a walk with him.
- 57. ☐ Letting him know you feel lonely when he is out of town or away from you for a period of time.
- 58. ☐ Relating what happened to you during your day.
- 59. ☐ Sharing your fears, concerns, joys, failures, etc.
- 60. ☐ Seeking to support your ideas with biblical insights and good reasons.
- 61. ☐ Refusing to "cop out" or withdraw and attack or exaggerate or blameshift when he seeks to make constructive suggestions or discuss problems.
- 62. ☐ Giving him your undivided attention when he wants to talk.
- 63. ☐ Discussing the meaning of certain Bible passages or discussing how to improve your marriage or home or children or child raising efforts, etc.
- 64. ☐ Cheerfully staying up past your bedtime to resolve a disagreement or problem.
- 65. ☐ Holding him close while expressing genuine concern and tangible and vocal love when he is hurt, discouraged, weary, or burdened.
- 66. ☐ Being eager to share a good joke or some other interesting information you have learned.
- 67. ☐ Working in the yard or painting a room together or washing the car.
- 68. ☐ Planning vacations or trips together.
- 69. ☐ Wanting to keep your family memorabilia, newspaper clippings, church releases, etc., that have to do with your family.
- 70. ☐ Bragging to others about him and his accomplishments and how good a husband he is.

- 71. ☐ Joining with him in a team ministry at the church.
- 72. ☐ Doing a Bible study or Bible research together.
- 73. ☐ Doing a good job in bookkeeping about family finances.
- 74. ☐ Helping prepare the income tax report.
- 75. ☐ Keeping touch through letters with your family and friends.
- 76. ☐ Keeping yourself attractive and clean.
- 77. ☐ Inviting other people in for dinner or fellowship.
- 78. ☐ Developing and using the spiritual gifts God has given you.
- 79. ☐ Asking him to pray with you about something.
- 80. ☐ Expressing how much you love the children and being the children's cheerleader.
- 81. Managing to stay within the family budget and even saving some for special surprises.
- 82. ☐ Being excited about sharing the gospel with others or about answered prayer or about helping other people.
- 83. ☐ Making a list for him of things that need to be done around the house.
- 84. ☐ Being satisfied with your present standard of living or furniture or equipment when he can provide no more.
- 85. ☐ Not making nostalgic comments about your father's way of providing, etc., which may seem to imply that you think your father was a much better man than your husband.

- 86. ☐ Acknowledging that there are some specific areas or ways in which you need to improve.
- 87. ☐ Taking care of his clothes so that he is always dressed well.
- 88. ☐ Appreciating and helping his mother and father and relatives.
- 89. ☐ Refusing to disagree with him in the presence of others.
- 90. ☐ Cooperating with him in establishing family goals and procedures and then in fulfilling them.
- 91. ☐ Being silly and unconventional in your love-making at times.
- 92. ☐ Telling him before he asks you that you think he has done a good job, if he has done a good job. Don't be afraid of repeating yourself in commending him for what he is or does.
- 93. ☐ Being available and eager to fulfill his desires wherever and whenever it is proper and possible.
- 94. ☐ Beginning each day with cheerfulness and tangible expressions of affection.
- 95. ☐ Letting the children know that you and your husband are in agreement; communicating to your children when your husband can hear (and when he cannot) how wonderful he is.

Ways a Husband May Express Love to His Wife

(How to Convince Your Wife That You Love Her)

Evaluate the way you express love to your wife. Circle the ways you are neglecting. Ask your wife to go over the list and put a check mark in front of the ways she would like you to express love. Ask her to add other things to the list.

You may express love to your wife by :

1. ☐ Functioning as the loving leader of your home.
2. ☐ Frequently telling her you love her.
3. ☐ Giving her a regular amount of money to spend in any way she chooses.
4. ☐ Leading family devotions regularly.
5. ☐ Smiling and being cheerful when you come home from work.
6. ☐ Helping her wash and dry the dishes at least twice a week.
7. ☐ Taking care of the children for at least three hours every week so that she has free ☐ time to do whatever she wants.
8. ☐ Taking her out for dinner or to do some fun thing at least once a week.
9. ☐ Doing the "fix-it" jobs she wants done around the house.
10. ☐ Greeting her when you come home with a smile, a hug, a kiss, and an "Am I glad to see you. I really missed you today."
11. ☐ Giving her a lingering kiss.
12. ☐ Patting her on the shoulder or fanny or holding her hand or caressing her frequently.

13. ☐ Being willing to talk to her about her concerns and not belittle her for having those concerns.
14. ☐ Looking at her with an adoring expression.
15. ☐ Sitting close to her.
16. ☐ Rubbing her back or... .
17. ☐ Shaving or taking a bath or brushing your teeth before you have sex relations.
18. ☐ Wearing her favorite after-shave lotion.
19. ☐ Writing love notes or letters to her.
20. ☐ Letting her know you appreciate her and what you appreciate about her. Do this often and for things that are sometimes taken for granted. Pretend you are trying to convince her you think she is great and very important to you.
21. ☐ Doing the dishes while she relaxes or takes a bubble bath.
22. ☐ Fulfilling her implied or unspoken desires and wishes as well as the specific requests she makes of you. Anticipating what she might desire and surprising her by doing it before she asks.
23. ☐ Playing with her; sharing her hobbies and recreational preferences enthusiastically; including her in yours.
24. ☐ Seeking to set a good example before the children.
25. ☐ Talking about her favorably to the children when she can hear you and when she cannot.
26. ☐ Bragging about her good points as a wife in every other area to others; letting her know you are proud to have her as your wife.
27. ☐ Maintaining your own spiritual life through Bible study, prayer, regular church attendance and fellowship with God's people.

- 28. ☐ Handling your affairs decently and in order; structuring your time and using it wisely.
- 29. ☐ Making plans prayerfully and carefully.
- 30. ☐ Asking her advice when you have problems or decisions to make.
- 31. ☐ Following her advice unless to do so would violate biblical principles.
- 32. ☐ Fulfilling your responsibilities.
- 33. ☐ Being sober, but not somber, about life.
- 34. ☐ Having a realistic, biblical, positive attitude toward life.
- 35. ☐ Discussing plans with your wife before you make decisions, and when the plans are made sharing them fully with your wife, giving reasons for making the decisions you did.
- 36. ☐ Thanking her in creative ways for her attempts to please you.
- 37. ☐ Asking forgiveness often and saying, "I was wrong and will try to change."
- 38. ☐ Actually changing where and when you should.
- 39. ☐ Sharing your insights, reading, good experiences with her.
- 40. ☐ Planning for a mini-honeymoon, where the two of you can do whatever you want to do.
- 41. ☐ Giving a low whistle or some other expression of admiration when she wears a new dress or your favorite negligee or... .
- 42. ☐ Gently brushing her leg under the table.
- 43. ☐ Being reasonably happy to go shopping with her.
- 44. ☐ Relating what happened at work or whatever you did apart from her.

- 45. ☐ Reminiscing about the early days of your marriage.
- 46. ☐ Expressing appreciation for her parents and relatives.
- 47. ☐ Taking her out to breakfast.
- 48. ☐ Agreeing with her about getting a new dress or some other item.
- 49. ☐ Thanking her when she supports your decisions and cooperates enthusiastically. Especially make it a matter of celebration when she supports and helps enthusiastically at times when you know she doesn't fully agree.
- 50. ☐ Asking her to have sexual relations with you and seeking to be especially solicitous of her desires. Express gratitude when she tries to please you.
- 51. ☐ Buying gifts for her.
- 52. ☐ Remembering anniversaries and other events that are special to her.
- 53. ☐ Watching the TV program or going where she wants to go instead of doing what you want to do. Do it cheerfully and enthusiastically.
- 54. ☐ Being cooperative and appreciative when she holds you, caresses or kisses you.
- 55. ☐ Being cooperative when she tries to arouse you and desires to have sexual relations. Never make fun of her for expressing her desires.
- 56. ☐ Running errands gladly.
- 57. ☐ Pampering her and making a fuss over her.
- 58. ☐ Being willing to see things from her point of view.
- 59. ☐ Being lovingly honest with her-no backdoor messages-no withholding of the truth that may hinder your present or future relationship.

- 60. ☐ Indicating you want to be alone with her and talk or just lie in each other's arms.
- 61. ☐ Refusing to "cop out" or "blow up" or attack or blameshift or withdraw or exaggerate when she seeks to make constructive suggestions or discuss problems.
- 62. ☐ Giving her your undivided attention when she wants to talk.
- 63. ☐ Cheerfully staying up past your bedtime to solve a problem or share her burdens.
- 64. ☐ Getting up in the middle of the night to take care of the children so that she may continue to sleep.
- 65. ☐ Holding her close while expressing tangible and vocal love when she is hurt, discouraged, weary, or burdened.
- 66. ☐ Planning vacations and trips with her.
- 67. ☐ Sometimes helping her yourself instead of telling the children to "help mommy."
- 68. ☐ Being eager to share a good joke or some other interesting information you have learned.
- 69. ☐ Joining with her in a team ministry in the church.
- 70. ☐ Doing a Bible study or research project together.
- 71. ☐ Establishing a family budget.
- 72. ☐ Keeping yourself attractive and clean.
- 73. ☐ Being cooperative, helpful, as a co-host when you have people in for dinner or fellowship.
- 74. ☐ Asking her to pray with you about something.
- 75. ☐ Spending time with the children in play, study, and communication.
- 76. ☐ Acknowledging that there are some specific areas or ways in which you need to improve.

- 77. ☐ Refusing to disagree with her in the presence of others.
- 78. ☐ Cooperating with her in establishing family goals and then in fulfilling them.
- 79. ☐ Being available and eager to fulfill her desires whenever and wherever possible and proper.
- 80. ☐ Beginning each day with cheerfulness and tangible expressions of affection.
- 81. ☐ Planning to spend some time alone with her for sharing and communicating every day.
- 82. ☐ Remembering to tell her when you must work late.
- 83. ☐ Refusing to work late on a regular basis.
- 84. ☐ Taking care of the yard work properly and in a timely manner.
- 85. ☐ Helping the children with their homework.
- 86. ☐ Refusing to compare her unfavorably with other people.
- 87. ☐ Handling money wisely.
- 88. ☐ Not allowing work, church, or recreational activities to keep you from fulfilling marriage or family responsibilities.
- 89. ☐ Trying to find things to do with her.
- 90. ☐ Being willing to go out or stay home with her.
- 91. ☐ Being polite, courteous, and mannerly with her.
- 92. ☐ Refusing to be overly dependent on your parents or friends.
- 93. ☐ Developing mutual friends.
- 94. ☐ Providing adequate hospitalization insurance.

- 95. ☐ Trying to the level of your ability to provide housing and some support for your family in case you should die or become handicapped.
- 96. ☐ Being especially helpful and solicitous when she is not feeling well.
- 97. ☐ Being on time.
- 98. ☐ Going to P.T.A. with her.
- 99. ☐ Letting her sleep in once in a while by getting the children breakfast and, if possible, off to school.
- 100. ☐ Frequently giving in to her and allowing her to have her own way unless to do so would be sinful.
- 101. ☐ Putting children to bed at night.
- 102. ☐ Being gentle and tender and holding her before and after sexual relations.
- 103. ☐ Not nit-picking and finding fault, and giving the impression that you expect her to be perfect.

6 | loving by learning

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 PETER 3:7

The roles of marriage for husbands and wives have become very confusing to many. In part, the problem is that one person attempts to fulfill the other person's responsibility. Often times the children are trying to act like the parents, or the wife is trying to take the responsibilities of the husband, and the husband neglects to function in a way that God intended for him.

While we know this leads to confusion, the question is, "Where do we turn to sort this all out?" The choices are very simple. We can turn to our culture and listen to the "counsel of the ungodly," or we can turn to the sufficient source of truth, the Word of God.

Steve Farrar, author of *Point Man*, says, "If you are a husband/father, then you are in a war. War has been declared upon [your] family. Leading a family through the chaos of American culture is like leading a small patrol through enemy-occupied territory." If husbands are to avoid becoming a casualty of war, we must understand and fulfill our role as husbands. God wants husbands to be learners!

1 Peter 3:7: “You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

The Command

God stated this principle in the form of a command. What word or phrase from this verse teaches us that this is a command? The command to “live with them” implies more than sharing the same address. Peter reinforces Ephesians 5:31 and Genesis 2:24 which state “the two shall become one flesh.” Therefore, living with your wife in an understanding way fulfills, in part, the one flesh relationship of the husband to the wife. What would you say to a husband who viewed this as optional?

Understand!

This is a command to understand. The word “understanding” actually comes from a Greek word which is also translated “knowledge.” This particular word means a knowledge based on personal experience. That is, because of what you’ve done with that person, because of interaction with them, you understand or know them.

This is the same word that Paul used in Philippians 3:10 when he said, “...that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;”

Our culture says, “You just can’t understand a woman.” But God says to the husbands, you must understand your wife and you must learn to “live with them in an understanding way.”

“To be understanding, he must try to enter into her situation and see as much as he can what she is facing from the

woman's viewpoint. That is difficult to do, but that is what it means to be understanding of another person: to try to get into [her] shoes."¹

What Does it Mean to Understand My Wife?

Understanding involves more than knowing. A husband can know his wife's favorite color, sweater, restaurant, etc. and still not understand her.

Understanding involves learning your wife's communication style. Women, for example, tend to speak indirectly. What your wife may frame as a question ("Does the trash can look full to you?") may actually be a request, an order, or an expectation ("Take out the trash!").

Understanding involves grasping your wife's communication perspective. Women tend to see communication as the glue of a relationship, whereas men tend to see it as something you do when there's a problem. For women, self-revealing conversations are valued because they make them feel close to another. Accordingly, a wife can be extremely hurt when her husband gives her the silent treatment, or she feels he is keeping secrets from her.

Understanding involves appreciating your wife's communication rituals. For instance, when women discuss a problem, they're often looking for concern, not a solution. When a decision needs to be made, they typically want to negotiate a consensus (unilateral decisions by husbands invite resentment and are asking for trouble). Understanding your wife requires cracking her communication code.

Understand there are exceptions to every rule. What may be true of women in general may not be true of your wife in particular. If you want to understand your wife, study

¹ Jay Adams, *Christian Living In the Home*, p. 97

her, pay attention to what she pays attention to. There is no shortcut to comprehending the feminine psyche.

What are some practical ways a husband can understand his wife in the following areas: communication, finances, child rearing?

Areas of Understanding

Marriage is the place for men and women to find expression and fulfillment for their important relational needs.

- Family commitment – Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 5:10, 14; Titus 2:4
- Affection – Ephesians 5:33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7
- Sexual needs – 1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4
- Companionship – Genesis 2:20; 1 Corinthians 9:5
- Admiration/Respect – Ephesians 5:33; 1 Peter 3:1-2
- Financial support – Ephesians 5:29; 1 Timothy 5:8

Husbands and wives have all these relational needs. But personality, temperament, and gender-differences account for differences in how important each need may be for each spouse.

Honor Her!

The responsibility here is on the husband to give the honor to his wife. Therefore, a husband cannot use the excuse that “she doesn’t deserve it.” The husband must give honor to his wife by being a learner regardless of his wife’s imperfections. When a husband knows his wife, treats her with respect, loves her, provides for her, as the marriage covenant requires, he then honors her.

She Often Needs to Decompress

Being a learner gives honor to the wife. Sometimes a husband does not want to honor his wife by being a learner. A wife often needs to “decompress” and share her thoughts with her husband. Let her decompress. A husband should tenderly listen to his wife and not think she is mad at him even if she sounds completely stressed out. It is often the case that she is trusting him with her heart. She doesn’t want you to fix her. She wants you to care about what she is saying.

A Fragile Vase

A husband gives “*honor*” to his wife “*as to the weaker vessel*” – as he would handle a precious, priceless, fragile vase. Women are not lesser, but like an expensive vase, they are more fragile than men. They are to be honored, cared for, and protected.

In other words, husbands, treat with respect and sensitivity this fragile creature God has made, called woman. She is not fragile only because you are physically stronger, but because you can crush her spirit with brutish words and actions of disrespect.

Marriage is a Measure

A clear warning is sounded at the end of this Scripture. You want God to listen to your prayers? Then take heed to this command. A husband’s prayer life is affected by the kind of learner he is. In other words, marriage is a measure of your walk with God. If a couple is not right with each other, they are not right with God.

Consider some implications to a husband’s marriage and family if his prayer life is being hindered by his disobedience to 1 Peter 3:7. According to Psalm 66:18, what are the results

of harboring unconfessed sin in our hearts? David says: "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear."

"Hindered" (*ekkopto*) is in the present tense and passive. Failure to give due honor to the wife will result in the cutting off of the efficacy of prayer. In other words, a couple that is not in matrimonial harmony will find it difficult to pray together and for one another. A couples domestic relationship has a profound impact on their spiritual fellowship with God. Our relationship with God can never be right if our relationships with our fellow-men are wrong.

Your wife wants a husband who will call her during the day, listen to her, take her advice, and see her as your very best friend. She wants to be "number one" in your life. More importantly, God requires that we as men care for our wives as a precious, fragile vase.

Ways to Honor Your Wife

Husbands, here are some ways you can honor your wife:

1. **Be sensitive to her needs.** If you ask what it is she needs, then listen carefully, she will reveal her needs to you. Then ask God to help you meet as many of those needs as you can.

2. **Let your actions, as well as your words, show her respect.** Don't sit in front of the TV while she washes the dishes, picks up after the kids and gets them to bed. She's more than mommy, maid, cook and nurse - she's your fragile vase, remember?

3. **Pay attention to her when she talks with you.** Put down the paper, look her in the eyes, and respond in more than monosyllables.

4. **Do not speak harshly to her and never tear her down, especially in public.** You can deeply wound her spirit by a harsh, discounting word. It's bad enough when

you do this in private, but it's devastating when done in public. Remember, a wounded heart finds it hard to give love.

5. Accept her feelings. You may not understand them, but you must respect them as real and viable. Never tell her, "There's no reason to feel that way, Honey." The worst thing to tell a hurting wife who's emotions are out of control is: "control yourself!" Instead care for her as a priceless, fragile vase.

6. Do not compare her unfavorably to someone else and never try to change her. When you criticize, you are saying, *I don't like you the way you are. Be different or I won't love you.* On the other hand, if you show her you love and accept her just the way she is, she may change simply because she doesn't feel pressured to do so. Regardless, you must commit yourself to allowing her to be all that she can be, not all you want her to be.

7. Never do anything to betray her trust. Unfaithfulness is the ultimate dishonor to your wife. Before God, commit yourself to be a faithful husband. Accept her for who she is, and love her as the woman God made for you and planned to be your wife before the world began.

7 | submission

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

EPHESIANS 5:22

I heard about an older couple sitting by the fire side. With his arm around his sweetheart, he turned to his wife and said, “After fifty years I’ve found you tried and true”. His wife was hard of hearing so she said, “What?” He repeated, “After fifty years I’ve found you tried and true”. She replied, “After fifty years I’m tired of you too!”

Ladies, I hope after fifty years you are not tired of your husband! I want to show you the secret to his heart today and the secret to a very happy marriage. The secret to a happy and lasting marriage is for you and your husband to live according to God’s design. God has a created order that allows all things to function according to His perfect plan.

A Helper Fit for Her Husband

Do you ever have conversations with your children and you are happy and surprised they have a good understanding of something? A couple years ago I was talking to my daughter Katie, and I told her wasn’t it wonderful to know the Lord and how she will probably one day raise a her family in godliness. Her response was delightful. She said, “Isn’t my husband going to raise our family?” I told her “Yes, but you are going to be his helper”. I was so happy that she understood

that. Most men can't make it on their own. That's why God said in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

The last two chapters of Ephesians is all about Spirit filled living. A Spirit filled family begins with a husband who loves his wife and a wife who is submitted to her husband in surrender to God.

Ephesians 5:18–24, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands."

This chapter is geared toward married women, but it is vital everyone to live a life of submission. A single or married person may get married one day, and they will need this teaching. Every one of us came from homes and some of them were very dysfunctional. We all need to get a biblical perspective on the home.

What is Submission?

The marks of Spirit filling listed in Ephesians 5 are singing, thankfulness and submission. The word "submit" is Greek military term meaning "to arrange troop divisions in a military fashion under the command of a leader". God is our general! We are all to serve where God has put us. Ranks in

an army must function together. Without that you have disarray.

A Helper Suitable for Adam

To understand when this order was established, please turn back to Genesis 2:18 where the whole foundation is laid for a woman's place in the home. We read that in God's perfect creation there was something "not good." Let's see what that is: "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help fit for him." God made the woman a helper suitable for the man. Married ladies here today, you are designed to be your husband's helper. This is the order God established at the creation of the world.

God's Order Brings Dignity & Value

Without order there is no worth. Imagine I were to show you the car I just purchased. My little Honda Fit. And the engine was strapped into Evan's car seat. And you lifted up the hood and there was Evan playing in the engine compartment. That would be cute, but you would not be very impressed with the way I rearranged my new car!

Or imagine you are looking for a new house to put your family in. You walk in, and the toilet and shower are in the living room. It might be convenient, but it devalues the house! You go to the bedroom and next to the hamper with dirty clothes is the dinner table. I think you might lose your appetite! You look in the bathroom and there is a greasy stove next to a sink where a man is shaving.

You are either in Alice and Wonderland, or things are quite *out of order*. When things are out of order they lose their dignity and value.

A Woman is to Be Prized

There is a difference between masculinity and femininity. The order is that man is the head and the wife is to submit. A woman is to be prized and protected. She is the fragile vase as 1 Peter 3:7 says. She is special. She is so important that she is to be prized. She should be given an environment that she can flourish and grow in. She is not meant to lead.

A Woman is to Be Protected

A man is made to protect that which is precious. God's order is to be protected. Paul says, "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior" (Ephesians 5:23).

Man is the head – the head designates *authority*. Now the sad thing in our culture is that headship has come to be known as a dictatorship, but it is not.

What Submission Does Not Mean

It is important that we understand what submission does *not* mean.

First, submission does not mean that you are inferior to your husband. Galatians 3:28-29, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

When it comes to our standing before God, there is no distinction between male and female. We're all equally created in the image of God, equally fallen and in need of salvation. Submission isn't a matter of who is smarter or the most deserving. Submission in marriage is simply another reflection of the beautiful pattern of roles seen in the Trinity. The

Son has submitted to the Father through all eternity, fulfilling His will, seeking to please Him.¹

Secondly, submission does not mean you give into the sinful demands of your husband. No matter what authority has been given to a person by God, no one has the authority to make you compromise your conscience. When the religious leaders told the apostles to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, they replied “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). If your husband asks you to lie, you should kindly refuse.

Thirdly, submission does not mean always agreeing with everything your husband does. All human authorities make mistakes. Sometimes we husbands think we are making fantastic decisions, and they turn out to be disastrous. You are allowed to respectfully give counsel to your husband. You are his helper. He needs your help.

If after you’ve clearly given your perspective and prayerfully presented your point of view, your husband continues on a course that you disagree with but which isn’t sinful, you are obligated to support and obey him.² In the meantime you can pray for your husband to make wise decisions, and to help you to trust in the sovereign plan of God.

Finally, submission does not mean that your husband takes the place of Christ. You are to submit to him as unto the Lord, but only the Lord is going to satisfy your longings. Your husband is going to fail. I didn’t have to tell you that he has already failed you miserably. Wives, the sooner you realize that the deepest longings of your heart can only be satisfied by God, the happier you will be.

The Church and Submission

¹ Elyse Fitzpatrick. *Helper by Design* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 147.

² *Ibid.*, 149.

God's order is to be pictured. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:24, "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." Marriage is picturing something amazing, our relationship with Christ.

Marriage is an Earthly Institution

Marriage is an earthly institution. Matthew 22:30, "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." Why is that? Because our temporary marriages are a type and picture of our marriage to Christ. Marriage on earth points to our eternal marriage to our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Paul says in Ephesians 5:32, "This is a great [profound] mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

A wife is to respect her husband at all times even if he doesn't deserve respect at the moment. This is God's Law. It is His command. God's been making happy marriages for a long time. He's the wisest Being in the universe. He makes no mistakes. The only way your family is going to have God's blessing is if you follow God's pattern. If you decide not to, you are going to severely mess up your life and the lives of your children if you have any. Determine right now to follow God's pattern and demonstrate the picture of Christ and the church!

The Trinity and Submission

The example for submission is within the Trinity. The members of the Godhead practice submission to one another. The members of the Trinity are co-equal in power and glory, yet the submits to do the Father's will. The Spirit speaks not of Himself but of Christ. How can you picture Christ?

Submission Defined

The word most often used in the New Testament for submission or subjection is a military term that indicates proper placement and rank. It means, “to arrange under, to subordinate, to subject oneself, to obey, to submit to one’s control, to yield to one’s admonishment or advice.”³

Submission flows out of your submission to the Lord. On your own you will not be able to submit to your husband’s leadership. We see in Genesis 3:16 that following the Fall, the woman’s desire has been to get out of God’s created order and take the leadership of the home. Genesis 3:16, “thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee”. The idea here is that “Eve’s desire will be to dominate her husband”, but her place is under the rule of her husband. It was not difficult before the Fall for Eve to submit to her husband. In fact it was delightful. But after the Fall, we all have self-will and pride and a deceitful heart. Our pride is always going to tell us that our way is best. We have a built in tendency to distrust authority.

Godly submission flows out of a woman’s submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. She needs God’s strength and grace to trust her husband. Submitting to her husband is submitting to God’s created order.

Submission Established at Creation

We need to understand also that submission was established at creation. The woman’s place of submission is not a result of the fall, but was part of God’s divine plan from the beginning. Genesis 2:18, “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” This occurred long before the Fall. To depart

³J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 1:467.

from God's created order is to depart from God. Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:13, "Adam was first formed, then Eve." The wife is to be a helper that is fitted to the man to complete him (Genesis 2:18). She is to help her husband achieve his goals. She is to mold the children. She is to be a keeper at home.

Based on that order of creation, submission is embracing the mission and vision of your husband. The word "submit" in our text is a military term used for troop alignment. Soldiers are to carry out the commands of their generals.

Do you know your husband's calling? Are you looking out for his interests? Are you helping him or opposing him.

Above all, submission is a spiritual issue. It is not simply outwardly embracing your husband's goals and vision, but it is a real submission to the Lord.

A Wife's Submission to the Lord

A husband is to provide places of safety so his wife can flourish. But husbands don't always do that. It's hard to submit. Sometimes it is a battle!

Verse 22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." The word most often used in the New Testament for submission or subjection is a military term that indicates proper placement and rank. It means, "to arrange under, to subordinate, to subject oneself, to obey, to submit to one's control, to yield to one's admonishment or advice."⁴

Submission flows out of your submission to the Lord. On your own you will not be able to submit to your husband's leadership. We see in Genesis 3:16 that following the Fall, the woman's desire has been to get out of God's created order and take the leadership of the home. Genesis 3:16, "your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over

⁴J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 1:467.

you”. The idea here is that “Eve’s desire will be to dominate her husband”, but her place is under the rule of her husband. It was not difficult before the Fall for Eve to submit to her husband. In fact it was delightful. But after the Fall, we all have self-will and pride and a deceitful heart. Our pride is always going to tell us that our way is best. We have a built in tendency to distrust authority. Again, submitting to your husband is submitting to God’s created order.

Submission is Possible

Submission is not based on a husband’s worthiness. He will never be worthy. Godly submission, ladies, flows out of your submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. Your life must be anchored to the sovereignty of God. You must trust that He has guided your husband to you, and that God is going to guide him. You need God’s strength and grace to trust your husbands. Submitting to your husband is ultimately submitting to God and His created order.

“I Don’t Feel Like Submitting”

Men and women do not want to fulfill their God given roles. Often men do not want to lead, or if they do, they often lead with a heavy hand. Women often do not want to follow, or if they do, they do it with resentment and not joy.

Most marriages begin with amazing bliss, but then the honeymoon is quickly over! The man thinks his wife is now going to be his slave. The wife thinks the man is going to forever be Prince Charming. What a wake up call. Many marriages very quickly descend into nitpicking, unhappiness, a total lack of forgiveness, and deep bitterness. Finally, there can be an ongoing anger or rage which leads people to want to end the marriage.

Marriage Rate

Over 50% of people in America seek to end the marriage. Those that divorce think ending their marriage will end the nightmare. A very sad problem when God's plan for marriage is not followed is the children do not have a father in the home. Understand that once a marriage ends, the real nightmare begins, especially for the children.

USA Today recently reported, "The United States has the weakest families in the Western world because we have the highest divorce rate and the highest rate of single parenting".⁵

I want to speak of this first hand, because I was raised by a single mother. Without Christ, this is a very destructive situation. If I had not come to know Christ, I would have been a cause for the crime statistics to go up. I speak from personal experience that without a father in the home, mom goes to work, and children are often left on their own. Proverbs 29:15 says, "a child left to himself brings his mother to shame".

Homes without Fathers

Without supervision and mentoring from my father, I can tell you that those in that situation are causing many of the out-of-wedlock births in our country. There is a rise in alcoholism, drug use, vandalism, and theft. My friends and I were the vandals that most people are afraid of. When I see vandalism and things defaced, it is a familiar sight. My friends and I would do the same thing to vacant houses when we were children. Most of my friends were from single parent homes, and none of us had a mom who loved the Lord. So we lived a very sad existence bringing our mothers to shame.

⁵ http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-07-18-cohabit-divorce_x.htm

A mother to me in the faith is Jane Harding. She was married to a man that was good friends with Jimmy Hoffa before he disappeared. Her husband was lost. He was unfaithful. He was not always kind to her. But she

The Blessing of God's Design for the Wife.

Without the Spirit-filled family, loving husbands, submitted wives, the fabric of the family and our country will and is falling apart. There has been a 1000% increase in unmarried couples living with one another since 1970 to today. Only one in four households in America have both a married husband and wife in the home.

The very hinge of our society is the mother in the home bearing and raising the children and being a help to her husband. Today, we have rejected that as a society. Couples are divorcing at a rapid rate. Some are not getting married at all. You cannot do this without horrific consequences. Bitter children can easily turn into burdens on society: vandals, gang bangers, thieves. Without the mother keeping the home, there is chaos in society.

It Takes Work to be A Great Wife

It takes work, but there is blessing. She is the organizer of the home. She is to guide the home. Look at Titus 2:3-5, "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, 4 and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled". It is a full time job to raise a child. It takes all the influence you have. There is no substitute for spending time with your child. You are responsible to organ-

ize your child's life according to godliness. You will give an account.

The Shaper of Her Husband's Heart

She is to submit to her husband and make his bread-winning a success. She is a helper fitted for her husband (Genesis 2:18). Eve was made to help and compliment Adam. She is not to be the HEAD of the home. She's got an even more important job than being the head of the home. She is to be the HEART and HELP of the home!

The Molder of Her Children's Lives

The wife, if she is able, is to bear children. This is one of the most important jobs in the world! Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:14, "So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander." Every moment mom is molding! Everything you do is being watched!

You and I often don't realize the power of simply living for the Lord in front of our children. You see, they watch. They listen. They're not taking notes literally, but they are taking note of every action, and every moment they are applying it to their own hearts. Every decision we make, we are helping form our children to either excuse their behavior since Mom and Dad did it, or to make the hard choice to do right since they saw Mom and Dad do right. Molding takes place every moment you are with your children, so make sure YOU are molding your children.

She is the greatest evangelist. 2 Timothy 1:5-6, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well."

For Christian wives, God's way is the best way. His order is the only order. Yield to your husband's headship. Cheer him on. In doing so you are preaching the Gospel and showing your submission to the Lordship of Christ. Your place is in the home. You are there to be a molder of children. You have the most important job in the world!

8 | the crazy cycle

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

EPHESIANS 4:31-32

Selfishness is the one thing that will kill the joy of marriage. Yet it is the one thing married couples have an ample supply of. It always leads to what I like to call the “crazy cycle”.

What is the “Crazy Cycle?”

The crazy cycle is a nickname for a set of selfish attitudes described in Ephesians 4. It begins when an insult is perceived. It could be a tone of voice. It could be words said that are taken the wrong way. It could be an expectation that wasn't met. Regardless of the way the insult or disrespect is perceived, it brings bitterness and it blows up into an argument ending with a settled hostility against one another. If you have been married for any length of time, you will understand what Paul is describing. He mentions six toxic attitudes that need be repented of in all our relationships, especially marriage, since Paul is about to talk about the marriage covenant in the Ephesians 5. These six toxic attitudes

are bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. The following illustration often hits pretty close to home.



A perceived insult or disrespect occurs. Then comes...

Bitterness (playing the hurt over and over)

Wrath (rage)

Anger (clamming up, grudge holding)

Clamor (shouting, blowing up)

Slander (insults, which starts new crazy cycle)

Malice (a settled hostility)

Selfishness

The crazy cycle is fueled by selfishness. With a selfish attitude, the goal is always to “protect or nurse my hurt” and to get my way no matter what. James says this way of thinking brings “disorder and every vile practice” (James 3:16).

The Answer to Selfishness? Surrender!

What’s the solution to the crazy cycle? Simple. Surrender to God. Die to self. Stop prosecuting your case. Swallow your hurts and feel for the other person (tenderness). Serve the other person and make life easier for them (kindness) and ask for forgiveness while refusing to insult the other person with their wrongs. Never say “Please forgive me, but...” Ask for forgiveness for your sins to God and to your spouse. Remember also that 99% of the time, the man is going to need to take the initiative in this because he is the picture of Christ in the relationship. Christ went after His Bride and laid His life down for her. So must every husband.

Taking Out the Trash

I love the word Paul uses when instructing us what to do with these toxic emotions. He says to put them off. The idea is taking off a dirty garment or taking out the trash. Essentially we need to take these toxic emotions and refuse to be controlled by them. We need to take out the trash our lives. If we do not, we become very “stinky” inside our heart. That sink will go far beyond our marriage and into other relationships. When I don’t take out the trash in my house, I become like a hoarder. I hoard my selfishness and bitterness and nurse all my hurts and wounds. The problem is, it stinks and reeks and is rotten. Paul give all of us a wonderful, gracious and loving admonition: take out the trash! Stop the crazy cycle.

The Way of the Transgressor

One way to stop the crazy cycle is to remember Proverbs 13:15, “the way of the transgressor is *hard*.” It takes far more energy to be bitter

Surrender to God with...

- Tenderness
- Kindness
- Forgiveness

The “surrender cycle” begins with Ephesians 4:32: glorifying God by feeling the pain of the other person (tenderness), making life easier for the other person (kindness), and taking responsibility for my wrongs while forgiving the other person (forgiveness).

Building Trust

Once you are committed to a moment by moment surrender to God, you can begin to build trust. The answer is

not to change your spouse, but to see transformation in your own life. Trust is absolutely necessary to have godly communication. The more tender, kind, and forgiving you are, the more you will be able to work on your problems / difficulties in a godly way. Every time you choose to please God instead of self, you build trust.

9 | the power of surrender

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

JAMES 3:13

The book of James is written to mainly Jewish people at the church in Jerusalem. James is the half brother of our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the children that was later born to Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus. James, as well as the vast majority of his congregants, was extremely well-versed in the Bible. James was starkly aware of the temptation his congregation had in using the Bible in a wrong, selfish, and even demonic way.

This problem of twisting the Bible for self-centered gain still exists today. In fact, I am personally very good at twisting the Bible to get my way in my marriage. Let me explain.

Living with a Monster

When I was first married, I thought I was quite far along in my Christian walk. At that time I had been a Christian then for eight years. I had read through the Bible quite aggressively, and I sincerely wanted to please the Lord. Then something truly awful happened. I realized I was living with a monster. And the monster was me! I had no idea how very selfish I could be when I didn't get my way. I found out that

when I really wanted my way, I could give my dear wife 100 reasons from the Bible why I was right. I would “prosecute” my case, and I almost never lost. I thought I was leading my wife and being the head of my home, but I was really doing damage to my wife. I found soon enough that I wasn’t comfortable just talking about the Bible with her. I didn’t have the spiritual connection I had with her before we were married. After about ten years of marriage, while I was reading my Bible one day, the light came on. The Scripture was opened to James chapter 3:13-18. This is what I read:

“Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

Doing the Devil’s Work

Immediately I realized that James was talking about two very different ways of living. There was the life of humble wisdom in contrast to the life of “disorder and every vile practice.” I was pretty sure which one I fit into. What also struck me were the roots of such behavior: bitterness and selfishness. In all of my discussions with my wife, I felt like I was right, and to top it off I was using the Bible. Many times I would be bitter that my wife just didn’t see things the same way I did. I used to think the problem was her. It wasn’t her at all. It was me. What really brought me to a deep convic-

tion of my own sin was the declaration from James that using the Bible in a selfish, unloving, and at times bitter way was “earthly, unspiritual, and demonic”. Wow. I was doing the devil’s work.

The Roots of Demonic Wisdom

Satan masquerades as an angel of light. His greatest tool to keep us from true holiness and humility is to use the truths of the Bible, but to apply them in a selfish way. The roots of the tree of demonic wisdom are selfishness and bitterness. To make things clearer, one way selfishness is manifested is through a sour, pouty attitude. This pouty attitude is focused on “me” and “my hurt”. It also turns very bitter and is manifested by a mean spirit. James says this attitude is earthly (self-centered), unspiritual (grieves the Holy Spirit), and demonic (3:15).

Getting My Way No Matter What

The goal of demonic wisdom is to get my way and protect my hurt no matter what. How do you know if you have been taken captive by this demonic wisdom? James says you will not be living a life of humble wisdom, but one that reflects “disorder and every vile practice.” I think this life of disorder is also described by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:31 as “bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice.” When we are playing the hurt over and over again in our minds (bitterness) and filled with a building rage or fury (wrath), we will clam up (anger, the Greek word from which we get our word *thermos*) and then blow up (clamor), which results in more insults (slander) and a settled hostility toward the other person (malice). This is no way to live. So how does one stop this “crazy cycle?”

Transgressing is Hard Work

Remember Proverbs 13:15, “the way of the transgressor is *hard*.” It takes far more energy to go through the “crazy cycle” than it does to please God. How many times have I let the sun go down upon my anger and clammed up for days until I blew up? Too many times to count. The goal in the crazy cycle is to protect and nurse my hurt no matter what. I become a “slave to sin” as Paul says in Romans 6:22. Being a slave to the slavemaster of bitterness is no fun. A bitter, selfish, unforgiving attitude is exhausting to carry around! It literally sucks the life and energy out of a person. Toxic emotions have this debilitating effect.

Surrendering to God

How does one surrender to God? It is simple. I change my goal from pleasing self to pleasing God. In surrendering to God, my goal now is to grow and change into the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28-30). Remember Jesus prayed, “Not my will but thine be done” (Luke 22:42). God says there is actually a war that is going on inside each of us for control. It is a war between the flesh (my selfishness) and the Holy Spirit. “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do” (Galatians 5:17).

Building My Roots in Christ

Each time that I surrender to God I am building a strong root system in my life that is going to produce a godly and humble way of living as James says. Surrender (choosing to please God instead of self) produces a selfless attitude focused on God that is pure, peaceable, reasonable, sincere, impartial and righteous (James 3:13-18). I don’t have to

shout or pout or fuss or slam doors or make selfish declarations. I can surrender and trust God with a pure and sincere desire to please God. I can speak with a tone of peace and impartiality. Ephesians 4 describes specific actions of surrender and selflessness. We can glorify God by doing three things when we feel insulted, neglected, or disrespected. We can choose to:

1. feel the pain of the other person (tenderness),
2. make life easier for the other person (kindness),
and
3. take responsibility for my wrongs while forgiving the other person (forgiveness).

The Result

James 3 says the result of this kind of surrender is a life of good conduct, humble wisdom, purity, peaceful, reasonable attitude, sincerity, righteousness, and peace-making. The result is the fruit of a life that is maturing in Christ! I have found that humbly feeling the pain of my wife and serving her and meeting her needs without bringing up her faults, but realizing what a big sinner I am requires far, far less energy than having a bitter spirit – and the rewards of a peaceful, humble life that pleases God are truly “out of this world”!

10 | the four rules

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

EPHESIANS 4:29

Kent Hughes recounts the power of the tongue in his book “Disciplines of a Godly Man”:

IN 1899 FOUR reporters from Denver, Colorado, met by chance on a Saturday night in a Denver railroad station. Al Stevens, Jack Tournay, John Lewis, and Hal Wilshire worked for the four Denver papers: the Post, the Times, the Republican and the Rocky Mountain News. Each had the unenviable task of finding a scoop for the Sunday edition. They hoped to spot a visiting celebrity arriving that evening by train. However, none showed up, so the reporters wondered what on earth they would do. As they discussed options in a nearby saloon, Al suggested they make up a story. The other three laughed - at first. But before long they were all agreed - they would come up with such a whopper that no one would question it and their respective editors would congratulate them on their find. A phony local story would be too obvious, so they decided to write about someplace far away. They agreed on China.

What if we say that some American engineers, on their way to China, told us they are bidding on a major job: the

Chinese government is planning to demolish the Great Wall?" Harold was not sure the story would be believable. Why would the Chinese ever tear down the Great Wall of China? "As a sign of international goodwill, to invite foreign trade." By 11 P.M. the four reporters had worked out the details, and the next day all four Denver newspapers carried the story - on the front page.

The Times headline that Sunday read: "Great Chinese Wall Doomed! Peking Seeks World Trade!" Of course, the story was a ridiculous tall tale made up by four opportunistic newsmen in a hotel bar. But amazingly their story was taken seriously and soon ran in newspapers in the Eastern U.S. and even abroad. When the citizens of China heard that the Americans were sending a demolition crew to dismantle the Great Wall, most were indignant, even enraged. Particularly angry were members of a secret society made up of Chinese patriots already against any kind of foreign intervention. Moved to action by the news story, they attacked the foreign embassies in Peking and murdered hundreds of missionaries from abroad. In the next two months twelve thousand troops from six countries, working together, invaded China to protect their countrymen. The bloodshed of that time, born out of a journalistic hoax fabricated in a saloon in Denver, was the time of violence known ever since as the Boxer Rebellion.'

What power the written or spoken word has! Nations have risen and nations have fallen to the tongue. Lives have been elevated and lives have been cast down by human speech. Goodness has flowed like a sweet river from our mouths, and so has the cesspool. The tiny tongue is a mighty force indeed.¹

¹ R. Kent Hughes. *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (pp. 135-136). Kindle Edition.

The Power of Our Words

Those who study words tell us that words are important. But one study says how we use those words is even more important. In fact the researchers concluded that all our communication consists of:

- 7% Words
- 38% Tones
- 55% Non Verbal Actions

The right words must be spoken at the right time. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver” (Proverbs 25:11). How can we apply this to our lives? We need to realize the power of our words.

Words are powerful!

Proverbs 18:21, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue...”

Gracious, kind words are powerful!

Proverbs 16:24, “Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”

Rash words are powerful!

Proverbs 12:18, “There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

Self-controlled words are powerful!

Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

The power of the tongue is most brilliantly displayed in James 3:2–10, “...we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man,

able also to bridle his whole body. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.”

The Four Rules of Communication

If they ought not to be so, how do we transform the tongue? Ephesians 4:25-32 describe what many have called the “four rules of communication.” They are rules that allow us to “fight fair”. Obviously no right thinking person wants discord in their marriage, but neither can we stick our head in the sand and never address areas of disagreement. Since there will always be misunderstandings this side of heaven, Paul gives us these four ways to communicate in a godly way.

1. Speak the truth in love: Ephesians 4:25, “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”

2. Reconcile conflicts quickly: Ephesians 4:26-27, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”
3. Speak to build up, not to tear down: Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”
4. Respond biblically, don’t react sinfully: Ephesians 4:30-32, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Your Words, Whatever they are Reveal Your Heart!

Luke 6:45, “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” There are many Christians whose words and life do not match. Some professing Christians have empty words. Consider Ephesians 5:4–8, “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. 5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children

of light!” In reality Paul is saying, talk is cheap! How important it is to have the discipline of godly communication and speak in a sincere and loving way.

1 – Speak the Truth in Love

Ephesians 4:25, “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”

What is Paul instructing us to do? – notice the principle of replacement. We should not just put off lying, but we should speak the truth. People don’t change just because they stop something – the sinful habit of thinking or action needs to be *replaced*.

This is a Command

“You speak!” You can’t say, “Well I don’t like that command, therefore . . . “ or “I don’t *feel* like doing that!” One of the problems in conflicts is when someone disobeys this command. We have to speak. God commands it. Therefore, clamming up is not an option for the Christian. We must communicate. Evading, avoiding, manipulating do not solve problems.

Why is it important for us to communicate honestly with others? 1 Corinthians 2:11 gives us the answer: “For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him?” We cannot read each other’s minds.

Honesty is More than Not Lying

Honesty is telling the truth (the facts, reality, and being open about it). Honesty must also include presenting the truth in a way that reflects God.

Paul says that we are to be “speaking the truth in love”. Literally “truthing in love” (Ephesians 4:15). This is the way

to “grow up into Christ in all thing” or in all aspects of your life.

Love is transparent and vulnerable. It serves others without thought of self preservation. The Savior demonstrated this love by becoming sin for us who knew no sin!

This is agape love. It is the great sacrificial love that gives and gives and gives. It is that love described in 1 Corinthians 13. It is not a feeling but an action. It is to have utmost concern for God and for your fellow man. In everything we say and are, we are to love our neighbor as our selves. We are to be concerned for their concerns. And we are especially to have a love for the brethren.

Truth spoken without a loving heart does damage. We need to “speak the truth in love”. This phrase “speaking the truth” is all one word in the Greek New Testament. It is the verb form of the word “truth”. It is more than just speaking, but literally “truthing in love”. And this verse is speaking of every Christian. All Christians are to be possessed by the truth of God, not in a superficial, cold way, but touched by the truth of God in the deepest part of your heart. This was the thrust of David’s confession in Psalm 51:6. Where did David go wrong? “Behold”, he said, “you desire truth in the inward parts”.

Agape Love is the very crown of Christian maturity. If you love as God loved, then you are like Christ. Now if the love of God is removed from our lives, now listen, all Christian virtue becomes corrupt. That’s a very important truth. If the love of God is not in our lives, then all the Christian truths or doctrines, virtue is not a good word, the truths of the doctrine become corrupt.

How about your tongue? Does it reveal a cold heart? You may know the truth, but do you speak the truth in love? Do you love people enough to live and speak in love? Are you

watching your tone of voice? Your heart always speaks louder than your words! Are you truthing in love? Whenever we speak, it is to be the truth. And truthful words come from a truthful life.

There is a weapon that is more powerful than any other weapon known to man. And it has been in existence since the creation of mankind; it has been known to start wars, ruin friendships, spurs national revolutions. It has ruined more reputations, wrecked more homes, split more churches, driven more men out of the ministry and caused more hatred than any other weapon in the world. Are you using it to edify?

Truthing in love is not telling everyone all your thoughts, opinions, & criticisms. The goal of speaking the truth is not you speaking your mind but solving conflicts in a way that brings glory to God.

Have You Ever Been Lied to?

Have you ever been lied to? As Psalm 116:11 says, “All men are liars.” The 9th Commandment says “Thou shalt not bear false witness”. Yet every person on earth is a liar. We are all guilty and we all need the Savior.

McDonald’s Promotional Photo

Lying continues on in various forms in the world. Have you ever looked at the pictures of the food at McDonald’s or another restaurant? It’s never the way it looks in the picture. The whole world is steeped in lies—presenting themselves falsely. Manipulation, shifting of the facts, cutting corners—all of this is deceit.

Lying is a way of life in this world. Yet this way of life *stops* for the one who has become a Christian.

A New Life & a New Heart

We have “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (verse 24). There for Paul says in the past perfect tense... “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor” (Ephesians 4:25).

Dishonesty is Not Pleasing to God

Here are a few examples of dishonesty:

1. *Outright deceit* (includes exaggeration, embellish truth). Sometimes this is done deliberately, sometimes it is the result of the passage of time. It's quite easy to do when you are the one 'hurting' or 'offended'.
2. *Contradiction* between body language and tones and the content of what we say. Consider this example. Question: What's wrong? Answer: Nothing! (with a sharp tone, or rolling the eyes).
3. *Exaggeration*: adding to the truth, usually to make us look better than we really are – 100% words such as “always,” “never,” “everyone” can often mean that we are exaggerating. For example: “You never help me with the dishes.” “You always leave your socks in the middle of the room.” “Everyone agrees with me.”
4. *Evasion*: not telling the truth by avoiding, by changing the subject, by “blowing up” or bursting into tears to avoid having to deal with the real issue
5. *Camouflage*: disguising the real message or using innuendo – not being “up front” or “direct.”
6. *Half Truth*: only telling half or part of what really is true

To speak the truth in love means:

- Be careful *what* you say
- Be careful *how* you say it

- Be careful *how much* you say
- Be careful *when* and *where* you say it
- Be careful *why* you are saying it

2 – Reconcile Conflicts Quickly

Ephesians 4:26-27, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.” Another way to say this is: solve today’s problems today! We are to use the emotional energy that God gives us to direct it towards bring glory to Him as we seek to resolve problems in a way consistent with His will for our lives!

In other words, Paul is saying: “When you’re angry, don’t sin further by not reconciling. Repent of your anger and reconcile before the sun goes down”

When Jesus addresses the problem of worry, there are implications to communication. Consider Matthew 6:33-34, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

The implication is we need to deal with today’s problems today. Don’t bring the ‘baggage’ of yesterday into the problems of today.

Failure in attempting to solve each day’s problems quickly is sin. Don’t carry them over into tomorrow (Matt. 6:34). Why? Because failure to solve problems quickly:

- Opens the way to resentment, hatred, bitterness
- Distorts subsequent problems
- Endangers the sexual relationship
- Sets the stage for spiritual discouragement

Anger is Not Necessarily Sinful

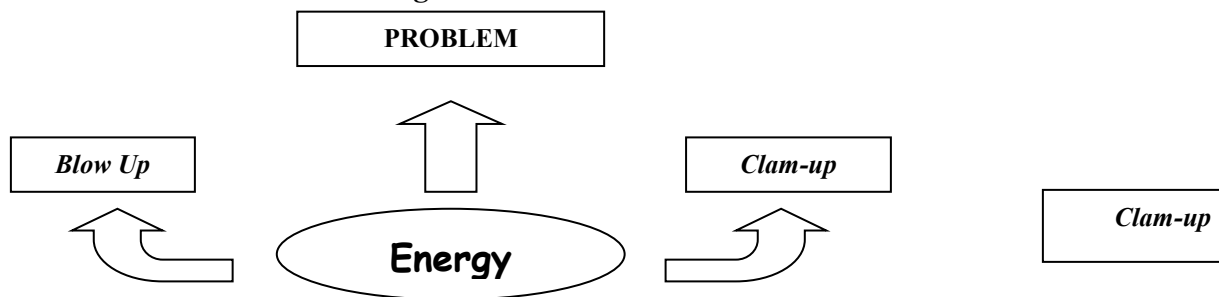
Anger itself is not sin. Psalm 7:11 tells us that “God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” Christ was angry – consider the cleansing of the Temple (Mark 3:5; John 2:13-17). Christ’s anger was righteous because he got angry for the right reason– it was what they were doing to His Father’s house! In other words, anger that is God-centered is not sinful.

Sinful Anger vs. Godly Anger

Sinful anger is self centered and out of control. Godly anger is God-centered and under the Holy Spirit’s control. In our sanctification, we can look at it in this way: anger is energy to be used to solve problems in a way that pleases God and helps me grow in sacrificial love.

Anger is a God given emotion which produces energy intended to help you solve problems biblically and solve them today. It is a force to motivate you to biblical action to solve problems. Godly anger is not concerned primarily for self but for God's name and His reputation. We might call it “conviction”.

Anger becomes sinful when it is used to attack others or self. You can detect it when deep bitterness begins to set in about the problem. Attacking others is one of the things that usually happens when you don't harness your anger to handle conflicts in a God-honoring manner. You may blow up quickly or the energy of unsolved problems builds and builds. Consider the following illustration.



Stop Clamming Up

When a person doesn't want to talk and solve problems he may cut off communication a number of ways. Examples of clamming up are cutting off communication by . . .

- crying
- threatening an explosion - volcanic eruption
- Bottom lining: "All I have to say is..."
- blame shifting, getting defensive, minimizing, or running away
- A person may also laugh, change the subject, get self righteous, ignore the relationship by giving the cold shoulder or anything else to avoid dealing with the problem.

Making Satan Your Counselor

Caution: the failure to solve problems daily = giving place, or a foothold, to Satan! It literally means "a beach-front" whereby he is able to launch an attack! The wicked one is always looking for ways to bring strife and rebellion to the table.

Consider the advice of the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 5:6–8, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

Can you just imagine if we were really honest about what is really going on in our homes? You ask, "Did you hear about our new counselor?" "No, who is it?" "Well, it's Lucifer. We've asked the wicked one to counsel us tonight. We've decided that we are going to see how long we can exhaust each other and have him put us in the prison of bitterness and despair we were delivered from!"

Of course we would never really have a conversation like this, but it is often very close to reality.

Questions for Quick Conflict Resolution

Here are some questions to ask yourself before bringing up an issue:

- Do I have all the facts right? (Prov. 18:13, 15)
- What is my motive for bringing it up? (Prov. 27:6, Matt. 12:34b)
- Have I dealt with my own logs (sins) first? (Matt. 7:1-5)
- Is this something that my love should cover? (has it already been dealt with?) – (1 Peter 4:8)
- Are my words loving? (rehearsing what you are going to say beforehand can be helpful) – (Eph. 4:15, Prov. 15:1)
- Is my timing right? (Prov. 15:23b, 25:11)
- Have I prayed and asked God for wisdom and understanding? (Prov. 3:5, Phil. 4:6-7, 1 Thes. 5:17)
- Note the sobering warning! (Eph. 4:27 – “give no opportunity to the devil”).

3– Speak to Build Up, Not to Tear Down

Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Jesus warns us that hurling insults at someone is related to the sin of murder. The warning is being addressed to our times conflict with another or when we are angry with someone. A person may be “Proverbs Fool” (fits the description) but be careful about your ‘motive’ and ‘attitude’ when calling a person that name!

The point is this: when you verbally attack a person you are really criticizing God in whose image that person is made.

Instead, we are to put off “corrupting talk” – putrid, rotting, destructive words. We are to replace these words with speech that is “edifying” – words that build up and encourage us in our growth in Christ.

Wrong Goals

We need to put off the wrong goals:

- Make sure I’m heard
- Get my way
- Win the argument
- Hurt the other person
- Make myself look good
- Manipulate

Dangerous Words

These kind of words are dangerous, destructive, and painful. James 3 says these words are “set on fire of hell”. We need to get rid of:

- words that cloud or by-pass the conflict, i.e. “I know but...[introduce new conflict]”
- words that do not solve problems or benefit the relationship, i.e. “divorce”, “I hate you”, “I wish I never married you”, “We made a mistake in getting married”
- words that destroy unity, i.e. “I don’t trust you”, “I don’t respect you”, “I don’t love you”, “I wish you were more like so and so”
- words that grieve the Holy Spirit because we are not following His Word by edifying those who He indwells.

The Goal of Biblical Communication

What is the goal of biblical communication? It is always to build up the other person, to give them grace and space to grow. We need to make sure our words are timely and appropriate to the need. If we do not obey, we will grieve the Holy Spirit (v. 30).

Attacking the Problem

What does it mean to attack the problem? Answer: To discuss the problem in God-honoring way. Use "edifying" communication that encourages or builds up. That's what Paul meant when he wrote to speak the truth in love. We are to bring glory to God as we try to solve the problem.

In other words, solving the problem is not the goal. Growing in Christlike character is. Do I return good for evil? Can I turn the other cheek? In other words how we say something is just as important as to what we actually say. Our words should edify and be filled with "grace" to those who hear. "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6). We need to make sure our words center on personal responsibility and demonstrate sympathy for the other person.

4—Respond biblically; don't react sinfully

Ephesians 4:30-32, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

The pattern described above is what we describe earlier in this book as "the crazy cycle" vs. true surrender to God.

We have a choice. We can focus on the circumstances, perceived injustices, and hurts and become bitter, angry and demeaning, or we can be tender, kind and forgiving. It's a choice between God's glory and vainglory. Consider again the selfish reactions that we are told to "put off", literally to take out the trash of our hearts:

- Bitterness – nursing the hurt and playing it over and over
- Wrath – rage. "Why would they hurt me?" "I don't understand!!!"
- Anger - settled indignation or hostility that frequently seeks revenge; often manifested in the person "claming up"
- Clamor – shouting, i.e. "blowing up"
- Slander - speech that injures, abusive speech, insults
- Malice - the desire to harm others or see them suffer, a settled hostility

What is the lesson? The natural tendency (and thus sinful response) of our Genesis 3 nature is to be defensive about dealing with our own sins.

Take Godly Action!

God tells us to put on certain attitudes that come from the Holy Spirit. We are to "be" what we truly are in Christ.

- Kind - benevolent, helpful, courteous – to literally make life easy for another
- Tenderhearted - lit. "of good heartedness," compassionate, sympathetic, feeling the other's pain
- Forgiving - to give up your right or claim to revenge, hold a grudge, or get even.

Conclusion

Remember that conflicts are possible only if each person reacts. It takes two to argue. If you don't react, the argument dies.

Remember as well that one person may be wrong, but a conflict or fight occurs because the other reacts. Conflict occurs when one or the other react, attack the person instead of the problem, we neglect to keep current, or we fail to be honest.

Changing habits is not easy but can be done with God's help! Paul told us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." Again, going through the way of escape is much easier than the "*way of the transgressor*" (Proverbs 13:15)

Finally, remember that you can't change the other person, but you can change how you respond and/or how you initiate the communication! No matter how irresponsible the other person is, you must act according to God's way of communicating.

HOMEWORK

1. Look over Tim Keller's principles of communication and be ready to discuss it.
2. Take the next two weeks and fill out the marriage inventory.

Marriage Inventory Questionnaire

Name: _____

Date: _____

Communication				
	True of me	True of my spouse	N/A	Comments
Hardly ever shows a sincere interest in what I am saying	☐	☐	☐	
Regularly speaks to me in a way that is grumpy, unloving, and sometimes disrespectful	☐	☐	☐	
Sometimes is evasive in communication and sends "backdoor" messages... i.e. "What's wrong?" "Nothing!"	☐	☐	☐	
Often belittles me	☐	☐	☐	
Dominates the conversation with me	☐	☐	☐	
Punishes me by tone or reaction	☐	☐	☐	
Punishes me by blowing up	☐	☐	☐	
Punishes me by clamming up	☐	☐	☐	

Cares more about watching the TV than talking with me	☐	☐	☐	
Cares more about surfing the Internet than talking with me	☐	☐	☐	
Cares more about _____ than talking with me	☐	☐	☐	
Seems more interested in talking with others (friends, parents, church family, etc.) than talking with me	☐	☐	☐	
Has a habit of saying offensive or shocking things in order to get my attention	☐	☐	☐	
Can be nasty or sarcastic in their way of responding to me	☐	☐	☐	
Lectures and moralizes in our conversations	☐	☐	☐	
Has to mindread, and read into the other person's words and accuse me of meaning things I didn't really say	☐	☐	☐	
Insists on having the last word	☐	☐	☐	
Often brings up my past mistakes	☐	☐	☐	

Often refuses my suggestions or advice without really thinking about what I am saying	☐	☐	☐	
Is too serious and somber and need to be more cheerful and bright	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely pays me a compliment or gives me positive feedback	☐	☐	☐	
Keeps emotions bottled up too much	☐	☐	☐	
Gets easily offended when I am sharing my day with him/her – thinks I'm just complaining	☐	☐	☐	
Holds grudges for extended periods of time till he/she gets her way	☐	☐	☐	
Does not seem to really forgive me	☐	☐	☐	
Brings up the past / uses it against me	☐	☐	☐	
Will not let go of the past	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	

	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
Children & Child Rearing				
	True of me	True of my spouse	N/A	Comments
Puts kid(s) first over me	☐	☐	☐	
Ends up sleeping with child(ren) most nights or the child(ren) ends up sleeping with us	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely helps me with caring for the child(ren)	☐	☐	☐	
Lets child(ren) watch too much TV/movies/Internet/video games	☐	☐	☐	
Thinks I'm not very in- volved with the kids	☐	☐	☐	
Would like me to help more with the child(ren) – putting to bed	☐	☐	☐	
Needs to get the child(ren) to learn to put themselves to sleep at night	☐	☐	☐	
Coddles the child(ren)	☐	☐	☐	

Disciplines the child(ren) way too much - too much of a disciplinarian	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely helps with disciplining the child(ren)	☐	☐	☐	
Does not have much of a relationship with the child(ren)	☐	☐	☐	
We can't agree on how many children we should have	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
Household Organization				
	True of me	True of my spouse	N/A	Comments
Allows clutter everywhere	☐	☐	☐	
Stresses too much about the order of the house	☐	☐	☐	
Can't keep the car clean	☐	☐	☐	

Can't keep up with the laundry	☐	☐	☐	
Leaves their clothes lying around	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely helps clean the dishes / kitchen cleanup	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely helps with household chores	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely helps with the cooking	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely helps with the laundry	☐	☐	☐	
Never finishes with household projects	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
Extended Family / In-Laws				
	True of me	True of my spouse	N/A	Comments
Consults way to much with their parents	☐	☐	☐	
Takes their parents advice over mine quite often	☐	☐	☐	
Thinks I hate his/her parents	☐	☐	☐	

Defends his/her family before defending me	☐	☐	☐	
Lets his/her family determine our family outings / vacations / or special times together	☐	☐	☐	
Gets way too much advice from his / her parents	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
Intimacy / Romance				
	True of me	True of my spouse	N/A	Comments
Almost never wants to have relations	☐	☐	☐	
Seems to always want to have relations	☐	☐	☐	

How often are you and your spouse together intimately	Check one		☐ Once a week or more ☐ About every two weeks ☐ Maybe once a month ☐ Maybe every other month ☐ About 2 or 3 times a year ☐ Almost never	
Can't just cuddle, always wants to have relations	☐	☐	☐	
Withholds relations to punish me	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely recognizes when I am trying to be romantic	☐	☐	☐	
May have a problem with pornography	☐	☐	☐	
Seems to have scars from the past that we can't get over	☐	☐	☐	
It seems all my spouse thinks about is intimacy	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely seems to enjoy our times of intimacy	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	

	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
Habits				
	True of me	True of my spouse	N/A	Comments
Often stays up too late	☐	☐	☐	
Goes to bed too early	☐	☐	☐	
Snores too much - it keeps me up!	☐	☐	☐	
Hardly trusts anyone	☐	☐	☐	
Has low self-esteem	☐	☐	☐	
Drives too slow/fast (circle one)	☐	☐	☐	
Has difficulty finishing things	☐	☐	☐	
Does not like to fix things around the house	☐	☐	☐	
Watches too much TV/Internet	☐	☐	☐	
Shops way too much	☐	☐	☐	
Hates shopping	☐	☐	☐	
Gets upset because I spend more time with friends/work than I do with her/him	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	

	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
Walk with God				
	True of me	True of my spouse	N/A	Comments
Struggles with his/her walk with God	☐	☐	☐	
Rarely/never has family devotions	☐	☐	☐	
Seems spiritually proud / "holier than thou"	☐	☐	☐	
Seems spiritually de- feated	☐	☐	☐	
I wish my spouse would read the Bible with me	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
Finances				
	True of me	True of my spouse	N/A	Comments
Does not seem to care about finances	☐	☐	☐	
Stresses out too much about finances	☐	☐	☐	

Says I don't have enough faith or trust in God with regard to money	☐	☐	☐	
Buys a lot of stuff without regard to a budget or need to save money	☐	☐	☐	
Never likes to do anything special because it will cost too much money	☐	☐	☐	
Doesn't understand the need to save money for the future	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	

Other Comments

COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

(These communication guidelines
were provided by Timothy Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian
Church of New York City.)

First read Proverbs 18:21; 25:11; Job 19:2; James 3:8-10;
I Peter 3:10; Ephesians 4:25-32.

Think about the guidelines and study the supporting
Scripture verses. Rate yourself on each of these items : Ex-
cellent (3), Good (2), Fair (1), Poor (0).

1. Be a ready listener and do not answer until the other per-
son has finished talking (Prov. 18:13; James 1:19).
2. Be slow to speak. Think first. Don't be hasty in your
words. Speak in such a way that the other person can un-
derstand and accept what you say (Prov. 15:23, 28;
29:20; James 1:19).
3. Don't go to bed angry! Each day clear the offenses of that
day. Speak the truth always, but do it in love. Do not ex-
aggerate (Eph. 4:15, 25; Col. 3:8; Matt. 6:34).
4. Do not use silence to frustrate the other person. Explain
why you are hesitant to talk at this time (Prov. 15:28;
16:21, 23; 10:19; 18:2; Col. 4:6; Prov. 20:15).
5. Do not become involved in quarrels. It is possible to dis-
agree without quarreling (Prov. 17:14; 20:3; Rom. 13:13;
Eph. 4:31).

6. Do not respond in uncontrolled anger. Use a soft and kind response and tone of voice (Prov. 14:29; 15:1; 25:15; 29:11; Eph. 4:26, 31).
7. When you are in the wrong, admit it and ask for forgiveness and ask how you can change (James 5:16; Prov. 12:15; 16:2; 21:2, 29; 20:6; Matt. 5:23-25; Luke 17:3).
8. When someone confesses to you, tell him/her you forgive him/her. Be sure it is forgiven and not brought up to the person, to others, or to yourself! (Prov. 17:9; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; I Pet. 4:8).
9. Avoid nagging (Prov. 10:19; 17:9; 16:21, 23; 18:6, 7; 27:15; 21:19).
10. Do not blame or criticize the other person. Instead, restore . . . encourage ... edify (Rom. 14:13; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 5:11).
11. If someone verbally attacks, criticizes, or blames you, do not respond in the same manner (Rom. 12:17, 21; I Pet. 2:23; 3:9).
12. Try to understand the other person's opinion. Make allowances for differences (Prov. 18:2, 13, 15; Phil. 3:15, 16).
13. Be concerned about the interests of others (Phil. 2:3; Eph. 4:2; Rom. 12:15).

11 | learning to speak greek

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

ISAIAH 55:8-9

Once a dear missionary told me that his intercultural relations class was most helpful not only for his church planting endeavors in Asia, but also for his marriage! How true that is! Someone famously wrote the book “Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus”. If you’ve been married for any length of time, you can commiserate! It is true that men and women think in completely different ways. I remember while I was in college I took both Spanish and Greek at the same time. I had to learn how to think in different ways. Learning to understand my wife will take slightly more effort than learning to become a Greek scholar! No matter what the effort, Peter tells us that we should make every effort to understand each other. He says to the husband:

“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). Though this is to be exemplified by the husband, it is the duty of both

husband and wife to understand each other. If we are not communicating rightly with each other, we cannot communicate rightly with God. This was Peter's conclusion.

Different is Good!

God made us all different. We need to appreciate our differences. One of the main excitements of human existence is variety. We all like to learn, grow, and discover all the different things God has created. That is, until we get married! Then we want our spouse to think like us! We need to remember that God made us different, and that is good!

God Never Changes

We don't always appreciate these differences because we can't see God clearly. We have to always remember that all marriages are terribly imperfect, and that God in His perfect wisdom put our marriage together. Consider what theologians call the incommunicable attributes of God, and apply them to your marriage.

All Powerful

God is omnipotent. He can do anything. He chose to put you and your spouse together. Jesus said, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:9). God could have put you with any one on the planet, but before He formed the universe or ever star was made, He knew your life and joined your paths in one.

All Knowing and All Wise

God is perfectly wise. In other words, He knows everything, and He makes the best choices possible. Perhaps there are all kinds of terrible things that surrounded your getting married. God knew that, and He still chose to put you to-

gether with your spouse. He knows what is best for you. He wants you to be conformed into the image of His Son. Your marriage is one of the primary tools God has decided to use in order to make you like Christ.

Eternal

God could have had you be born where ever He wanted and when ever He wanted and joined your path to whom ever He wanted in any time in history. He chose you to live right here and right now with the right person to bring you to maturity in Christ. You did not choose your parents, your gifts, your background, or the timing of your salvation. God who is perfect chose all these things for you.

Good

God is good all the time. We often say that, but do we believe it? God chose the very best person in the world. He gave the very best gift to you to bring about His plans for you. He is more kind and loving and tenderhearted and sympathetic than any human being will ever be. And being as good as He is, He chose your spouse for you because He loves you.

Really?!

Having considered all of who God is, we still want to sit back and say some days: “Really!?” This is the best God can do? We think this way because we don’t know it all. God says to us in Isaiah 55:8-9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” God knows what is best. We cannot see what He sees. We must trust the God we say we believe – He is good,

eternal, all wise, and all powerful, and He knows what He is doing!

The 5 Love Languages

How many times do we hear about people not feeling loved by their partner, much to the partner's surprise and frustration? Have you ever tried to show love to your spouse and been rejected? A big part of this is we do not speak the same language.

According to Dr. Gary Chapman, author of "The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate" it is often the case that love is there and being expressed, but not in the "language" that the loved one understands. Each of us has a primary language of love...ways that we express love, and things we see as expressions of love. If we can learn and use each other's love language, we can increase the quality in our relationships.

We all seek God honoring, fulfilling relationships, but we often miss each other's heart because we do not speak each other's language. The languages Dr. Chapman proposes are very helpful. They are: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch.

Words of Affirmation

An unsolicited compliment, a kind word, and words of encouragement are very powerful. Mark Twain once said "I can live for two months on a good compliment."

Quality Time

This means togetherness and personal connection, not just being physically nearby. Having a quality conversation, really listening to each other. Taking time to have fun to-

gether. Doing things you each enjoy; exploring new activities together.

Receiving Gifts

The message here is that the gift giver was thinking of you and wanted to let you know. Expense is not the main thing – it's the meaning of the gift, the thought behind it. A favorite treat picked up on the way home or a card for no reason sends a priceless message.

Acts of Service

Cooking, washing the car, or doing the laundry can be acts of love. Challenge the stereotypes. Doing something that is helpful to your loved one will be noticed, if such acts of service is their language of love.

Physical Touch

A hug, a kiss, holding hands, and sexual intercourse are all ways of communicating love. Research indicates that positive physical contact is important to emotional health; some say you need four hugs a day.

Men are from Mars

Men are not really from Mars and women are not really from Venus, but some days it sure feels like it! There are a number of differences between men and women.

Personality Types

Mark Gungor lists four personality types based on Aristotle's profiles. The ancient philosopher put people into four categories that Gungor recreates:

- Sanguine (**fun** country): The sanguine is a sociable person. they laugh for the hard days, wise words when

squeezed by the burden, creative, enthusiasm, and always have the energy to start. Sanguine people are the life of the party. They have a lot of friends. They love to talk, to perform, help each other and they always curious.

- Choleric (**control** country): The choleric is a strong person. They have a strong leadership. They are faithful, brave, and have the freedom to be on one's own. They are not afraid to make a change. They are strong-willed and assertive, goal oriented, well organized, and they don't really need friends. They always be the superior one in the emergency time.
- Melancholic (**perfect** country): Melancholies is a sensitive person. They have the depth to see the heart and soul of life. They are thoughtful, analytic, serious, and enjoy order. They are the perfectionist, so they love details.
- Phlegmatic (**peace** country): The phlegmatic is a peaceful person. They esteem stability and like working in the background. They are patient and have a great compassion for people. They prefer calmness over everything. When another is confused, they are humble, silent, controlled, and often a good listener. They tend to be the mediator, and they are easy to get along with. But be careful, the person from peace country does not like conflict and does not handle it very well.

Though we are all differently in our cultures, habits, personalities, and traditions, we must never use any of these things as an excuse to sin. Yet, it is good to accept and celebrate the variety and “spice” that are in each of our personalities. We are all, as the Psalmist said, “fearfully and wonderfully made!” Each married couple has a responsibility to communicate in an understanding way to bring glory to God

and the harmony in marriage that reflects Christ and His church.

The Conference Table

In order to bring your marriage to the next level, you need to communicate about absolutely everything, at least initially. Each of you needs to fill out the Marriage Inventory Questionnaire. We will use this in your scheduled times of talking together, what we call the “Conference Table”. We define the Conference Table a structured use of the 4 Rules of Biblical Communication (Eph. 4:25-32)

- Speak the truth in love, v. 25
- Reconcile conflicts quickly, vs. 26-27
- Speak to build up, not to tear down, v. 29
- Respond biblically, don’t react sinfully, vs. 30-32

The conference table is a time that you set up for six days during the week. This is about a structured way to use the four rules of communication. You are not to discuss any of the items on the list until you are at the conference table. This week I want you to use the five main issues you wrote down last week.

At the conference table you will alternate who leads with what you will talk about. The person not leading will take notes of the session and bring them to class. This week though during conference table, I want you to begin by talking about what you are thankful for in your marriage (be honest and truthful—don’t say something as a veiled insult—name things you are *truly* thankful for in your marriage). Take time to talk about what needs to change, and then give these things to the Lord. Take only ONE issue only for each day. Take one of the least emotional issues to talk briefly about and then spend time in prayer giving yourselves, your

problems, and all that you are to the Lord. Have the conference table for 15 minutes to a half hour. Do not exceed 30 minutes.

The goal is not “I’ve got to get my spouse to change”. The goal is “I need to change to be more like Christ regardless of whether my spouse changes.”

Fill in the times you will meet this week for a half an hour.

Fri: _____ (Moderator: _____)

Sat: _____ (Moderator: _____)

Sun: _____ (Moderator: _____)

Mon: _____ (Moderator: _____)

Tue: _____ (Moderator: _____)

Wed: _____ (Moderator: _____)

Thu: Marriage Enrichment Class

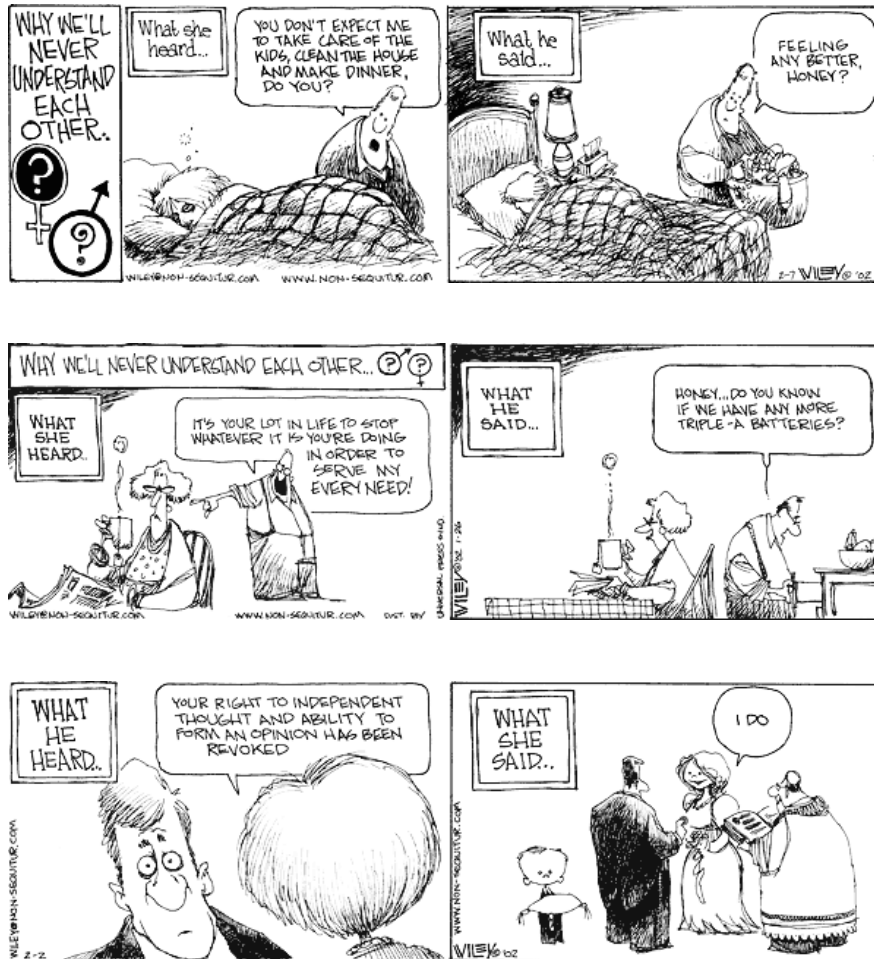
Practice: Let’s right now go through a conference table session. Let’s say the wife’s issue is communication and the husband is taking notes. Have the four rules of communication out in front of you.

- Open in prayer
- Each give one thing you are thankful for in your marriage
- Discuss issue
- Pray about it.

HOMEWORK

1. Set up and do the conference table six out of seven days next week.
2. Take the personality test (both husband and wife) at flagpage.com. The cost is \$12.

3. Be ready to talk about the results. After taking it, were you surprised by the results?
4. If available, view Mark Gungor's seminar "Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage" and be ready to discuss it.¹¹



¹¹ Note: We do not endorse everything in Mark Gungor's ministry, but have found this series helpful.



12 | biblical repentance

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10–11

How do we identify true godly repentance? This is the greatest struggle with our children or with anyone you share the Gospel with. You've talked to someone and they said, while half distracted—"Yeah, I believe Jesus died for my sins". Yet there is no visible sign of repentance. Others we have seen weep and cry out for God to save them, but afterward there is no transformation of life whatsoever. How can we identify true repentance, which the Bible calls "godly sorrow"?

Several years ago I went through an airport security checkpoint. Something went off in the scanner, and I was searched as well as my carryon and computer. Wouldn't it be great if there was some kind of repentance detector? When people seem to be acknowledging their sin before God, it would be fantastic to have some kind of meter for their

sincerity! Well, we do have something of a detector. It is the Word of God.

Paul tells us what true repentance is: “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.” (2 Cor. 7:10-11).

Building on the right foundation is important. If you build on the sand, your house is going to sink in the sand. I’m told that the vast majority of young people are leaving our churches. Why is that? I think folk are building on a wrong foundation. Jesus said “Repent and believe the Gospel”. We need to understand that repentance and faith go hand in hand. Brokenness and God-dependence are together. Deep remorse and transformation—they are together!

We have a temptation to build on the shaky foundation of simple acknowledgement of the facts. But we’ll deal with that another time. Others build on the foundation of sorrow, thinking if there is sorrow for sin, there must be repentance. I want to look at that today. What is true repentance? First let us consider what it is not.

The Eight Qualities of Godly Sorrow

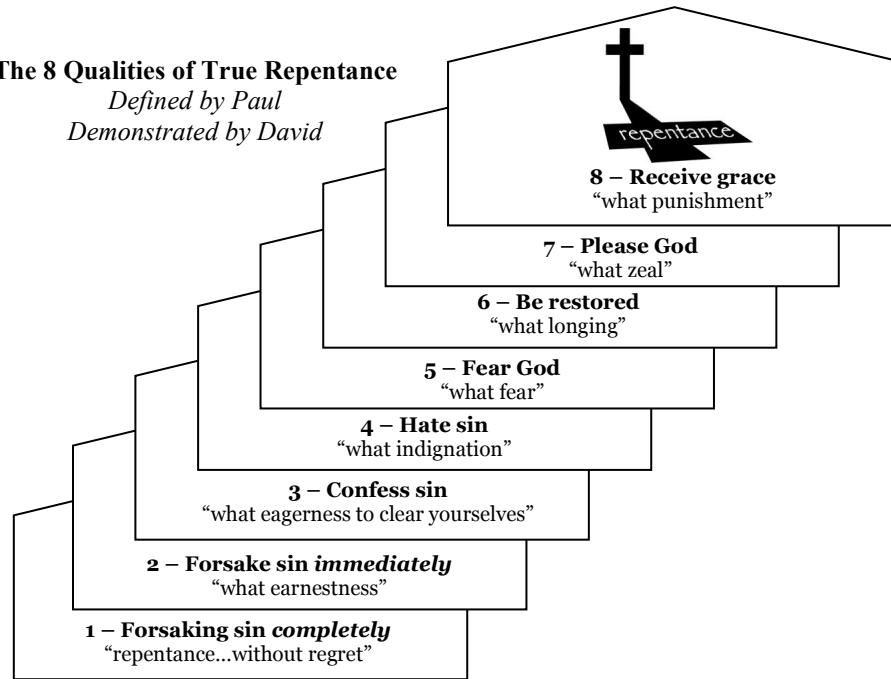
The following is a case study of David’s repentance compared to Paul’s definition of repentance.¹² Paul define

¹² The essential core of this study was compiled by Mrs. Betsey Keefe of Roselle, Illinois.

godly grief in his second letter to the Corinthians.

The 8 Qualities of True Repentance

*Defined by Paul
Demonstrated by David*



David gets to the defining aspect of godly repentance: a God-centeredness: “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (Psalm 51:4). Let’s consider Paul’s eight marks of true repentance.

1 – Forsaking sin *completely*, “repentance...without regret”

Godly repentance is a “repentance that leads to salvation **without regret**”. There is no regret from being totally delivered from the sin. There is a desire to get rid of the sin completely. It is not enough to take responsibility for the sin and own it and confess it. It must be *completely forsaken*. “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but

he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy” (Pr. 28:13). David’s cry was: “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!” (Ps. 51:2).

2 – Forsaking sin *immediately*, “what earnestness”

Godly repentance doesn’t play around with sin and make excuses to deal with it another day. Paul observed this in the Corinthians when he said, “see what **earnestness** this godly grief has produced in you”. There was a sincere and urgent desire to be radically in getting rid of the sin immediately. David’s desire is, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Ps. 51:1).

3 – Confessing of sin / coming clean, “what eagerness to clear yourselves”

Godly repentance produces and “**eagerness to clear**” yourself by taking complete responsibility for sin. It’s not my parent’s fault, not my spouse’s fault (if married), not because I’m Irish or African or Asian. It’s not because I was abused or maltreated or hurt. My sin is my responsibility. I own it. It is a disgrace to God and no one made me do it. I chose to sin against the beauty and holiness of God. David did not duck responsibility for his sin. He cried, “I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.” (Ps. 51:3, KJV).

4 – Hatred for sin because it violates God’s glory, “what indignation”

Godly repentance brings an “**indignation**” or hatred toward sin because God’s glory has been violated. It is not

just bad because it affects me, but it is an insult to God's holiness. John Bunyan said, "Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of His mercy, the jeer of His patience, the slight of His power, and the contempt of His love". David confessed, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Ps. 51:4).

5 – The fear of God and His holiness, "what fear"

Godly repentance brings a deep **fear** of God and a profound realization of His presence and nearness. With the Holy One being so near to such a sinful creature, there is a very real fear of God that builds and takes hold of the heart. Isaiah confessed, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Isa. 6:5). "David cried out to God, "Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11). There also may be a very real fear that if God does not help you, you will be left in your sin. David is essentially saying, "Please don't leave me God!"

6 – The vehement desire for restoration, "what longing"

Godly repentance brings a profound **longing** to be restored to an intimate relationship with God. David said, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" and "renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:12, 10). There is a fear in cleaning up the mess of sin, but the desire to enjoy intimacy with God far outweighs the fear. Restoration may entail making things right with others by confessing, making restitution (if something was taken), asking for forgiveness. This can be

debilitating to think about, but there must be a sincere willingness to do whatever it takes to make things right before intimacy with God is restored.

7 – The enthusiastic desire to please God, “what zeal”

Godly repentance brings a **zeal** and enthusiasm to do whatever it takes to please God. David said, “Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you” and “my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness” (Ps. 51:13, 14)

8 – The realization that God’s grace is costly, “what punishment”

Godly repentance brings a shocking realization of God’s mercy that allows us to avert God’s wrath. David referred much to this in the 51st Psalm:

- “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions” (1)
- “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God” (14)
- “you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering” (16)
- “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (17)

It is only because of the mercy and good pleasure of God that He grants a reprieve from my just sentence to eternal punishment for my sin. I have violated His holiness and in exchange His dear Son has received my just penalty. By faith, I receive costly grace. With brokenness and joy I receive the costly gift of God’s steadfast and loyal love.

Through repentant faith I trust that God has blotted out my sins, and I access His full favor and abundant mercy and grace.

To see it worked out, consider the following graph of true repentance.

What we need to avoid: Worldly Sorrow

The word “sorrow” or “repentance” is *lupeo* (to cause pain, to make sorry). Everyone is sorry! What makes sorrow godly or worldly is whether it is God-centered or man-centered.

Worldly Sorrow Demonstrated

Consider Esau (Gen. 27; cf Heb. 12:17, “*he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears*”). What was his motive? He was sorry for what he lost! His goal was position & possessions, i.e. “I want what I want” (self gratification).

Consider Pharoah (Ex. 10:16-17, “*I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. 17 Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only*”). What was his motive? He was sorry for he had to suffer! His idol was peace—removal of suffering, i.e., “I’m hating life” (self preservation).

Consider King Saul (1 Sam. 15:24-30) “*I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD*”. Saul begins to hunt down David because he’s intoxicated with the

glory of human power. What was his motive? He was sorry he got caught! His desire was popularity and people pleasing, i.e., “Let’s move on!” (excuses for self), “Tell me what to do”, “hoop jumping.”

Consider the Nation of Israel (Joel 2:13, “...*rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God*”). What was their motive? They were sorry for the circumstances! Their desire was to remove bad circumstances, i.e., “Woe is me!” (self-pity).

Consider Judas (Mat. 27:4, “*I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.*”) What was his motive? It was self pity and anger at self! His desire was to take away the consequences, i.e., “Stupid me!” (anger at self – fears consequences).

Qualities of Worldly Sorrow

- Self-centered
- Consequence focused
- Regret giving up sin
- Laziness, carelessness, lack of concern
- Excuses, rationalizations, defending accusations
- Angry at the mess, angry at others, angry at self (not sin)
- Fears consequences and others the most
- No longing for true restoration
- No real effort to correct the real heart problem, instead there is “hoop jumping”
- Creates various false refuges to counter the guilt

Worldly Sorrow Described

Various expressions of worldly sorrow (responses to sin that

stand in the way of true repentance).

- The person who waters it down. “It’s no big deal!” “Let’s move on...”
- The person who wallows in it. “Poor me!” “I got caught!” “How stupid!”
- The person who works to get rid of it (PENANCE). “I’ll make up for this.”

Penance: “A religious attitude prompting men to attempt to pay for their sins through good works and suffering.”¹³

The Results of Worldly Sorrow

The immediate results of worldly sorrow are temporary: There is this habitual “kiss and make up” syndrome, a deception of oneself, and no sanctifying change. Worldly sorrow always goes back to sinning. Remember Pharoah. How many times did he let the people go? What about King Saul?—how many times did he say he had sinned against David, and kept going back?

The person demonstrating worldly sorrow has never given up the idols of the heart. If you struggle with anger or depression, you don’t need anger or depression management, you need worship realignment. The person with worldly sorrow is still worshipping at the throne of self! Ultimately there is only one sure result – death (Romans 3:23; 7:13). James 1, “*sin when it is finished bringeth forth death*”.

¹³ C. John Miller. *Repentance and the 20th Century Man* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1980), 19-20.

What God desires and designs: Godly Sorrow

The word “sorrow” or “repentance” is *lupeo* (to cause pain, to make sorry). Godly sorrow is God-centered. The motive is always a need for God’s grace and a deep desire for the glory of God. “God is right to send me to hell, but He is so amazing to forgive a wretch like me!” Consider the following people.

King David – 2 Sam. 12; Ps. 32, 51, His heart cry was: “Be gracious to me O God” “Against thee and thee [God] only have I sinned”.

Peter – Luke 5:8, Peter saw Jesus high and lifted up through the miracle of the fishes, and, “he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Isaiah – Isaiah 6:5, “mine eyes have seen the king the Lord of hosts”.

The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). His heart cry was: “I have sinned **against heaven** and against you”

The Apostle Peter – Luke 22:61-62, “**the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter...** 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.” Sometimes there are no words, just weeping. The reason we know Peter’s repentance was real, is that he was fully restored to God. We know that Peter’s weeping was God-focused. Remember, Peter had seen the battered face of the Son of God look right at him, and it was a broken hearted repentance that probably cried, “I have sinned against my loving Lord!” Peter wasn’t fleeing from the Lord when he saw Him next. Remember he was fishing, and what did Peter do? John told Peter the Lord was on the seashore. According to John 21:7-12, Peter jumped into the water and swam all the way to shore, beating everybody! Remember Jesus said,

“Come and dine!” By that time the other disciples had come to shore with the net, and Peter grabbed a hundred and fifty three fishes, but the net wasn’t broken! He was ready to be restored to Christ. What zeal! What true repentance! Remember who preached the first sermon of the New Testament era at Pentecost? It was Peter!

The Thief on the Cross – Luke 23:39-43, “**we indeed [are condemned] justly**; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto **Jesus, Lord**, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” His heart cry was: “remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom”. The thief was done with his own kingdom. He wanted Christ’s kingdom! God can radically deliver you from you! The truly repentant person prays: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” That is the most dangerous prayer that you can pray. It’s a prayer of self-crucifixion. Jesus came to break the back off your worship of self! He knows self-glory leads to self-destruction. The most effective god-replacement is *self*. You are never worshipless. You will always worship something! True repentance always crucifies self and puts God’s kingship in that place.

The repentant see sin as ugly, like a leach. What if I were to roll my sleeve down and reveal a leach on my arm? I would do whatever it takes to get that blood sucker off my arm! If you knew leaches were in the area and you swimming in a creek, you would get out of the creek and do what? Start examining yourself.

Self-examination: (with a God-focus, not a self-focus) –
“O wretched man...who shall deliver me?... I thank God...”
“Woe is me I am undone for mine eyes have seen the King...”

Come clean with a full admittance of sin. “Woe is me for I am undone!” Proverbs 28:13, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

Be restored by the reception of God’s grace and forgiveness. “Thy sins are taken away, and thy siins purged.” There is always forgiveness that follows all godly sorrow. Faith and repentance cannot be separated. If you think God cannot forgive you, then you have a heart full of pride. You will not believe God’s promises.

- “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground” (Isaiah 44:3).
- “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isaiah (Isaiah 43:25).
- “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).
- “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).
- “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).
- “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity...?” (Micah 7:18).

Misconceptions (counterfeits) of godly sorrow...

- Not just an activity of the mind
- Not just an intention to do right (remember Saul)
- Not just a sense of wrongdoing and guilt (remember Judas)

- Not just a felling of anguish or terror over sin
- Not just shedding tears over sin (remember Esau)
- Not just admitting sin (most people admit sin)
- Not just a resolve against sin or even stopping a particular sin
- Not just trying to do the right thing

All of the above can be very *man-centered* filled with selfish motives.

What is true repentance?

One good definition is found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q87). “Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after, new obedience”.

One author said it this way:

“Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace whereby a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are repentant, so grieves for and hates his sins as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.” – William Plumer, *Vital Godliness*, 214.

What is the sure result of godly sorrow?

The sure result of godly sorrow is that it leads to true

repentance. If you yield to God in repentant faith, He will fully pardon you. 2 Cor. 7:10, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of”. We need God centered sorrow and a full reception of His pardon. All His promises are for the truly repentant.

Remember, it’s all of grace! You cannot follow a formula for repentance. Repentance is a gift from God that comes through His Word and His Spirit. You cannot make someone repent. It is a miracle of grace. Acts 11:18 says the early Jewish believers were shocked and prayed to God when the Gentiles were saved—it says they “glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life”. 2Timothy 2:25 tells us how we are to teach unbelievers: “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth”. God must grant it, and He grants it through the instruction of the Word of God. God chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the mighty that no flesh should boast or glory in His presence! (1 Cor. 1:26ff).

Consider God’s promises to the broken hearted.

- Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”.
- 1 Peter 5:5, “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”
- Psalm 34:18, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit”.
- Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt

not despise”.

- Psalm 147:3, “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.”
- Isaiah 57:15, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

Conclusion

We don’t have a “repentance meter” that man has built, but we do have a meter that we are all to measure ourselves by: the Word of God. Let us pray for God to work and look for signs of a contrite heart, humility, meekness, brokenness, godly sorrow, and a turning from sin to Christ.

When I was a child, I was caught at the beginning of a storm at the end of a baseball game a couple miles from my house. I was very young, and had never been through a thunder and lightening storm before. I saw the storm coming. I heard the thunder. I saw the lightening. I got on my bike and peddled. When I fell off my bike I ran as fast as I could until I saw a house where I knew I would be safe. It was a friend of our family. The storm is coming dear friend. But I have good news! There is safety in Jesus Christ. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. There is refuge in the Lord who died on the cross in your place. Flee to Him! Some words of great importance to believers need to be rescued by believers from misuse by the world.

13 | sex and the bible

*Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from
your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad,
streams of water in the streets?*

PROVERBS 5:15-16

Stuart Scott has an excellent chapter on sex and the Bible in his book *the Exemplary Husband*.¹⁴ It is so well said that I have replicated it for you below. Stuart writes:

There are many couples who come for counseling who need help in this area of their marriage. I have tried to be biblically appropriate and straightforward in an effort to help couples glorify God and serve one another in their times of intimacy.

The Current Scene

Any husband who is exemplary in the sexual area will certainly be unique in our society. Our country has been in a moral decline over the past fifty years which has drastically affected our culture. The light of God's Word has been steadily dimmed by a society that desires to practice the deeds of darkness. Many are not even aware of just how dark the times have become until God's light breaks through. I believe

¹⁴ The entirety of this chapter is from Stuart Scott. *Exemplary Husband* (Focus Publishing (MN), 2003), 143-155.

that the most obvious expression of that darkness is the perversion of one of God's greatest blessings: physical intimacy.

Our culture has become so dark in the sexual realm that shame is often not even in the picture. A case in point is the whole matter of President Clinton's immoral behavior during 1998. For the most part, we live in a country that perceives Clinton's deception and gross immorality to be irrelevant to his leadership position. As recently as ten years ago, however, a senator was disqualified from the presidential race for being unfaithful to his wife. Even as I write, citizens in California are voting on whether or not homosexuals should have the right to marry legally. The other day I was sitting with my family watching a basketball game when a disturbing advertisement came on TV. The commercial began with what sounded like a woman experiencing sexual pleasure and then continued with the revelation that the woman was only washing her hair. The announcer proceeded to use sexual language such as "stimulated" and "climax" to convince the viewer of their need to buy the shampoo that the woman was using. Unfortunately, many advertisements today unashamedly have an immoral element to them.

Society has moved so far from what God intended that, for many, physical intimacy is merely a means to selfish pleasure. This selfishness often causes problems even in Christian marriages. To God, physical intimacy is a sacred and beautiful thing (Song of Solomon). The only way to unscramble the sexual confusion in which we find ourselves is to understand and live by God's principles.

As a husband who desires to be like Christ, you must have God's perspective on sex in marriage. You can bring glory to God as you fulfill His intentions in this area and show true love to your wife.

If a husband understands the proper purpose and focus of sex in marriage it can have a far-reaching effect on the marriage relationship. This is not to say that a right understanding of sex is the answer to all marital discord.. In fact, the sexual relationship is often a barometer for the soundness of the marriage relationship in general. Getting God's perspective on physical intimacy will not solve other specific problems that need to be dealt with in the marriage, but it will go a long way in communicating love to your wife. Certainly, applying God's principles to the sexual area will only improve physical intimacy between a husband and wife.

SIX PRINCIPLES OF SEXUAL INTIMACY FOR HUSBANDS

1 – Sex is to be enjoyed.

Sexual intimacy in marriage was instituted by God; therefore it can be pure and holy and should be enjoyed.

God is the one who instituted sexual relations. He did this in the garden with Adam and Eve when He commanded them to become one and blessed them saying, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). We have already established (in Chapter 5) that becoming one means more than just the physical union, but it does include it (1 Corinthians 6:16). Everything God does is holy. Everything He tells us to do is right and good. Even after the Fall, we are told that the marriage bed should not be defiled. It is adultery (sex with someone other than your spouse) and fornication (all sexual activity outside of marriage) that defiles it:

Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Hebrews 13:4).

The original Greek word for "bed" (koite) in this verse, clearly refers to sexual union and is where we get our word coitus (sexual intercourse). If the marriage bed is not defiled, then it is holy. Sex as God intended is completely pure. If the heart is pure, intimacy in marriage is just as pure as anything else we do for God. It is as pure as prayer, praise, ministry, and giving. We just need to be sure our heart and actions at the time of physical intimacy are as pure as they are when we serve and worship God in other ways. Selfish sex is not pure sex.

Pleasure in sex is not sinful but rather assured and encouraged in

Scripture. We have already learned that our Lord intends for us to enjoy everything He has given (1 Timothy 6:17). The Song of Solomon is a marvelous example of the sexual enjoyment God permits and encourages in the marriage relationship.

Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love (Proverbs 5:18-19).

It is sex with the wrong person, for the wrong purpose, and/or with the wrong thinking that makes it unholy. Some men's minds have been significantly affected by their past sexual involvement or the sexual corruption that is all around us. The more we take our thoughts captive and view physical intimacy the way God does, the more we will enjoy it as the pure and wholesome act it was intended to be (2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 4:8).

2 – Sex is a barometer, but not the main thing.

Sexual intimacy in marriage should be kept in perspective. Sex should not be the basis for any marriage. It should

only be an aspect of the marriage. It is a good barometer not only as to where a couple is with each other, but where they are with God.

We have already seen that there are other more important purposes for marriage. Commitment, oneness, and companionship are the foundation of a good marriage. Husbands must not make physical intimacy more important than it should be. If sex is a consuming thing, something is seriously wrong. If your relationship revolves mostly around the physical, the physical is too important. Yet, sex should be a regular, constant reminder that things are healthy in your marriage.

As your wife's companion and shepherd, you need to delight in her person as well as in her body (Proverbs 31:28-30). A wife is usually quite aware of a wrong perspective. She can feel very much like an object being used for self-gratification if a husband is consumed with his passions and not delighting in who she is. Even-though the media encourages the exploitation of women, we Christian men need to have a very different perspective.

Sexual intimacy is important for three reasons. The first two are weightier than the third. They are to fulfill oneness (Genesis 2:24) and to fulfill the desires of one's partner (1 Corinthians 7:3-5), so as not to be vulnerable to temptation. I say these two reasons are weightier because they are related to direct commands in the Bible. The third reason is to partake of the wonderful blessing of children (Genesis 1:28). Certainly this reason is important, but it is not connected with any specific command (see Chapter 5: "A Husband's Understanding of Marriage," under the point of "Procreation").

3 – Sex is to be selfless.

Sexual intimacy in marriage should not be self-focused. The right focus during sexual intimacy is the other person—your wife. The sexual realm is just another area that we must apply the selfless love and servanthood we discussed earlier (1 Corinthians 13:5). This is the mindset that God wants us to have at all times. The amazing thing is, when we give the way we should, we also benefit as a byproduct. It is always "more blessed to give than it is to receive" (Acts 20:35). Both husband and wife should be seeking to please the other person in their times of intimacy. God has commanded husbands and wives to serve one another in this way:

The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband (1 Corinthians 7:3).

Some husbands are quick to point out that sexual satisfaction is due them, but not that it is due the wife as well. It is interesting that God even mentions the husband's duty first.

Having the main goal of pleasing and satisfying your wife first and foremost can revolutionize your times of intimacy. This unselfish focus is real love in action. What's more, you will enjoy the sex act more fully and in the right way.

Because of God's command to fulfill the desires of one another, both husband and wife can initiate sex and should seek to satisfy the other person completely and enthusiastically. The word "satisfy" in Proverbs 5:19 means to "sate" or "to intoxicate." There are a few Christian resources that can be helpful in learning how better to please your wife. Of course your first source (which may be enough) should be your wife. Work hard to have the kind of open and honest communication that will allow her to share her desires with you. The bulk of what follows in this chapter is a summary of the common knowledge that you will find in most Christian

resources. It is intended to help both you and your wife discuss key issues of your physical relationship. In addition, it should encourage you to sincerely pursue a Christlike (others) mindset in the sexual realm. To be a husband who sincerely has his wife in mind you will:

- Investigate and discuss the sexual desires of your wife. Ask your wife questions about her desire. Discuss and learn to sense how frequent and how strong her desire may be. Most wives have more desire at certain times of the month. There are some women who have stronger and more frequent desire than their husbands. There are some women who have very little desire. Most women can be brought to a place of strong desire by their husband's efforts, even if they initially have none. It is a good idea to set aside some uninterrupted time to talk about these things. Both husband and wife should work through any embarrassment. The more you talk about this perfectly holy and natural part of your lives, the more at ease you will become.

- Investigate the likes and dislikes of your wife. As many resources indicate, most women enjoy eye contact, loving words, kissing, holding and caressing very much. Naturally, your wife will enjoy the complete fulfillment of her desires. Still, ask your wife to be as specific as possible about what she really likes. Also, assure her that she can be honest about things she dislikes. Then of course, stop doing them! A husband and wife should seek to determine what is mutually enjoyable. I am not saying, however, that a spouse should only participate in what they, themselves, like very, much. Both husband and wife should be willing to serve by doing things that don't necessarily excite them. But you should not do something nor ask your wife to do something that you know she very much dislikes. This is thinking only of yourself.

- Be humble enough to learn. Bringing pleasure to your spouse is a learned skill! You can learn some things from the Bible (Song of Solomon) and other Christian books, but the best source is your wife. A husband and wife should never be too proud to be told what they are doing is wrong or even to have their hand guided to the right place. Let your wife help you learn what is best for her without getting defensive.

- Make personal hygiene a priority. Cleanliness or the lack of it can greatly affect your wife's enjoyment of intimacy. Showering (at least the day of), brushing your teeth, and being clean shaven (as opposed to the prickly-pear condition of yesterday's shave) will demonstrate consideration and avoid creating a major turn-off for your wife. It is difficult for a wife to be enthusiastic about a close encounter with bad body odor! It is nothing short of rude to ignore these seemingly small matters. If a husband is thinking of his wife, he will strive to be at his best and not his worst for physical intimacy. The various smells in Song of Solomon are appealing, not appalling (chapters 4-7).

- Only request or do what is approved by both consciences (husband and wife) and what is not physically harmful. It is fine for couples to experiment with new ways to bring pleasure to their spouses. Still, it is good to communicate about anything that is unusual or drastic. It is never loving to request (and certainly not to insist) that a spouse participate in anything that you know violates his or her conscience. Never use the manipulative line, "Well, if you love me, you will..." Even though certain practices are not expressly prohibited by Scripture, some people may associate a particular practice with a lifestyle of sin. Others may have always assumed that they are ungodly practices. Regardless, both the husband's and wife's 'consciences need to be completely clear on a matter before participating. It is also a violation of

biblical principles to do anything that is harmful to either body (e.g., anal sex). Love does not harm and we should take care of the body God has given us. Anything that does not repulse either partner, does not violate either conscience and does no harm to either body can be heartily enjoyed (Romans 14:23; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

- Seek to fulfill the desires of your wife even if you do not have the desire to be satisfied. In 1 Corinthians 7:4, Paul tells the wife that she "does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does." He also says that "the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." This verse instructs us that our bodies should be available to our spouse whenever possible. We must not think only of our interests (Philippians 2:2-3). This verse also makes it clear again that both husband and wife can and should initiate sex.

If we know that our spouse is desirous, we should offer our bodies in love. This goes for the husband who has already been sexually satisfied, leaving him extremely tired and no longer interested. Whether it is the husband or the wife who has no desire, the offer to please the other should be made in all sincerity. If the other spouse wills to be pleased, the one with no desire should do his or her very best to be totally involved for the sake of the other spouse. This is real love. There are probably few things worse to a husband or a wife than to have their spouse go through the motions while they are clearly not engaging their mind (heart) in the process. Ask God for His help to be committed to pleasing your spouse at all times.

- Not use your own body to gratify yourself. A man who gratifies himself (masturbates) is being self-focused. This act is clearly not the right use of our intimate parts. Our bodies are not meant to serve us, but God and our wife (1 Corinthi-

ans 7:4; 1 Corinthians 13:5). Another reason masturbation is wrong is because it usually involves engaging in lustful thoughts (Philippians 4:8). A third reason is that it becomes a very enslaving activity (1 Corinthians 6:12). Finally, it removes any need of self-control in the sexual area (1 Corinthians 7:1-2; Galatians 5:22-23).

4 – Sex is the culmination of a healthy relationship.

Sexual intimacy should be the culmination of a loving relationship. The sex act should be a picture of the love and compliment what is already present in the marriage relationship; the icing on the cake, so to speak. This is one of the main reasons why other marriage problems often affect physical intimacy. Physical intimacy itself should be a relational experience (Song of Solomon). This aspect of the physical relationship is something that we men typically have to work at since sexual pleasure is usually attained easily by us. Women, on the other hand, are typically much more interested in the relational aspect of the sex act. The exemplary husband will seek to maintain a loving relationship with his wife and make physical intimacy the relational experience it should be.

Some suggested ways to make intimacy more relational:

- Seek to quickly resolve conflict and work out other marriage problems in a biblical way.
- Regularly speak words of appreciation and say, "I love you."
- Regularly show her affection that is non-sexual.
- Approach physical intimacy in a tender and relational way (spend enjoyable time together beforehand, if possible).
- Purposefully think thoughts of love and appreciation during physical intimacy.

- Express words of love and appreciation during physical intimacy.

5 – Sex is happens differently for each partner.

Sexual excitement seems to happen differently for men and women. You may be well aware of the fact that sexual excitement comes about very differently for men and women. God has made us different. Usually men are quickly aroused by sight and can be ready in a moment to engage in the sex act. Our passion can react much like a match to kindling wood (to some, it's like gunpowder)! Sometimes the mere mention of the possibility has one steaming! We can also be ready for sex simply because it has been a while since the last fulfillment. Unlike many women, our desires can build when sex with our wives is infrequent. For the most part, we are set on "go," and our desires are inhibited by very little.

On the other hand, women are typically aroused by touch, rather than by sight. More time is typically needed as well. To use a helpful analogy, their passion works more like an oven that must be preheated. It has been documented that many women have to think about the prospect of sex for a while, before they have any physical reaction. A woman may have difficulty being aroused if she is tired, slightly ill, troubled by something, or even just distracted by noise. It would be interesting if we could get inside the head of a man and woman and see the difference in their thoughts about their times of intimacy together. A woman would most likely be thinking in terms of romance and touch, while a man might be thinking in terms of passion and sight.

These differences between men and women should not be cause for any offense. Instead, they should be accepted as amoral (neither right nor wrong) and they should help us be

understanding during physical intimacy. A husband should not automatically take his wife's slower arousal as a rejection of his love or a reflection of his abilities. Likewise, a wife should not automatically take a husband's quick readiness as a sign of shallowness, insensitivity or a lack of love. Men and women must learn to appreciate the differences that God has given them. This does not mean that we should not pursue ways to narrow differences a bit for enjoyment's sake. But we need to understand that differences are not necessarily a matter of right or wrong, and not necessarily a matter of a spouse's love. It's just how God has made us.

Having said all that, God has also made us all individuals. There are varying degrees of these differences and sometimes a reversal of the typical tendencies. Couples may be able to lessen differences through the way they approach or perform intimacy, or by consulting with their physician.

The goal of a loving spouse will be to bring the other person as much pleasure as possible. This means that one partner will seek to bring the other partner along in their desires. Sexual intimacy is certainly more enjoyable for a spouse if he or she is experiencing physical desire as well. If similarity of desire is not achievable, the spouse with the lesser desires should still seek to fulfill those of the other person as an act of love (Proverbs 5:15-19).

A husband should bring his wife along in her desires according to how her body responds. This is a way that he can be understanding toward his wife (1 Peter 3:7).

Your wife can usually be brought along in her desires in the following ways:

- Suggest physical intimacy in a loving way well in advance of the actual time. Give her time to think about it. Even early in the day before an intimate evening is good for women with few desires.

- Be personal, thoughtful, loving and gentle in your approach. Women are not to be roughly and abruptly man-handled. Husband, you need to be as little like a ravenous beast as possible! Looking into your wife's eyes, and whispering sweet "somethings" into her ear will let her know that you care for her, and will help her to respond well.
- Use self-control to calm yourself down in the beginning. Control your thoughts (and your eyes if necessary) in the beginning. Perhaps it is best for your wife to remain covered initially. Focus on her pleasure and not your own. Wait as long as possible in order to reach fulfillment together or bring your wife to fulfillment first. You and your wife both will experience far more enjoyment if you do not reach fulfillment before she does.
- Do what she really enjoys. Hopefully your wife has communicated what is pleasurable. Many written sources indicate gentle caressing that gradually approaches the intimate parts will probably be very enjoyable to her (Song of Solomon 4-7). Still, husbands should not assume that caressing is enough to satisfy. Unless your wife communicates a lack of desire, always seek to bring her to complete fulfillment. Another common misunderstanding among husbands is that the mere sex act will automatically bring the wife to this complete point. In actuality, this is often not the case. If simultaneous fulfillment is not achievable, a husband can bring his wife to fulfillment manually (by hand).

Your patience is the key to your wife's enjoyment. Rushing the process will only prove counter-productive. Obviously, there may be occasions when time does not permit an extended time of physical intimacy. As we said earlier, some

women are more easily aroused than others. There may be times when it is appropriate for the wife to forego her own satisfaction but still be willing to please her husband if he is desirous and time is short (however, not having enough time, men, ought to be the exception and not the rule). The husband can still seek to make the time as enjoyable as possible, especially by focusing on her and being relational. Of course, the husband should seek to fulfill his wife then as soon as he can. If at all possible, both husband and wife should be fulfilled during the same physical intimacy time.

It is important to mention that your wife may not always desire sexual completion. There should be communication with her on this issue. A wife may fully enjoy a time of intimacy with her husband without it. This fact is true when her desire is minimal. She can still enjoy being close with and pleasing her husband, as well as obtaining only a certain level of excitement. The wife, however, should be the one to decide to forego her satisfaction, not the husband for her.

6 – Sex is to be regular.

Sexual intimacy should be regular. The Bible is clear that we need to fulfill the desires of our spouse regularly and not deprive them.

Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:5).

There is only one reason to abstain from satisfying the desires of one's spouse. This reason is for a specific time of prayer for a specific reason. Both partners must be in agreement about abstinence for godly purposes. We should be aware that Satan will use the sexual area to tempt either a husband or a wife to sin if he can. Great caution should be

used before any decision to abstain. In fact, there needs to be a very positive and selfless perspective about physical intimacy. The thinking ought to be how often can we, rather than when must we.

A couple should also be aware that unless the frequency of the husband's fulfillment meets the general frequency of his desires, it can be very difficult for the husband to wait to please his wife first. This fact is especially true when there has been less practice in waiting as with a newly married young man. Therefore "keeping up" with the husband's desires will prove to be very helpful in the enjoyment and the satisfaction of the wife. Of course, understanding should be exercised when either spouse is virtually unable to meet the other spouse's desires due to sickness, surgery, travel or an emergency.

Enjoy What God Intended

In a society that has completely confused and degraded God's pure blessing of sexual intimacy, we must be different in our beliefs and practices. As exemplary husbands, we want our supreme love for God and our commitment to love our wife unselfishly to spill over into and flood the physical intimacy aspect of our marriages. In order to do this we must take selfish thoughts captive and replace them with loving thoughts while being focused on our wife's enjoyment. This focus will result in sincere efforts to fulfill the desires of our wife with fervor and joy. The sex act will then be the culmination of a loving relationship, rather than a means to gratify self. When a husband and wife have the right perspective of physical intimacy, they will enjoy it to the fullest and bring glory to God.

14 | raising a pharisee

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

MATTHEW 23:27-28

Matthew 23 is Jesus' last sermon, just days before He give His life for the world. It is a scathing message about false teachers. It also teaches us a lot about spiritual authority in our homes.

Catalog

Have you ever ordered something online or through a catalog and when you got it, it was nothing like the picture? Integrity is important.

Coffee

I've heard of people mistaking salt for sugar and putting it in their coffee. Substance and integrity is important. You may think you are getting one thing, but it is a real let down when you think you are getting one thing, but really you are getting something quite different.

It's no big deal in coffee or catalogs, but it is tragic in children. So often we have heard of parents doing everything

right, but the children depart from the faith. We see the result of a lack of a true knowing of God and gutting of the presence and power of God from our homes and from our churches.

Churches Closing

In the past 40 years, 1600 churches in England, with hundreds of years of ministry behind them, have shut their doors, according to an architectural preservation group called the Victorian Society. Churches in the United Kingdom have been turned into theaters, restaurants, museums—even mosques and temples. I have a whole series of photographs that I have taken of such buildings that were formerly churches.

Where England is today, America will be tomorrow—unless we act now and pray for God's blessing. It's time for a new Reformation in the Church—to call the Church back to the authority of the Word of God and to an authentic return to the Living God!

Jesus' Last Public Sermon

Look at Matthew 23. This is Jesus last public sermon. It's two days before Passover (Matthew 26:1-2). He gives the Olivet Discourse about the end of the world right after this. It's the Tuesday before Good Friday. He's already condemned the religious leaders by clearing out the Temple with a whip, turning over the tables of the money changers. Now His last public sermon is a scathing rebuke of counterfeit religion. Thursday Jesus will be tried and Friday He will be hanging from a tree for our sins. His last public sermon is a face to face rebuke of the Pharisees.

In Matthew 23 we have the Lord's warnings of woe to the Pharisees. He is saying: this path may look good, but it is a path to destruction!

False leaders lack 7 things...

- Spiritual Authority
- Integrity (Piety, Spiritual Disciplines)
- True Spirituality / New Birth
- Sympathy / Love for God and Others
- Humility
- Selflessness
- Lowly Service

As parents who want to raise godly children, we must be sure that we take heed to Jesus' warnings, or we are likely to lose our children, just like the leaders in Israel lost their generation.

WOE #1: Replace Spiritual Authority with Pretense (Spiritual Imitation)

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit [have seated themselves] on Moses' seat" (verse 2).

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. 14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation" (verses 13-14).¹⁵

¹⁵ Verse 14 is a verse transplant. It is not here, but in two other places. The church fathers when quoting Matthew 23 did not quote verse 14, but they did in two other places. By the way, the chapters and verses are all man-made. The first Bible in English to use both chapters and verses was the Geneva Bi-

No Pretense

Though it is a transplant by some well-intentioned scribe, it is a vital and biblical truth that goes well with this verse. What our children need is not pretense. Pretense is a false spiritual imitation.

Mechanical Christianity

Let me illustrate it for you. What our children need is authentic Christianity. Living, breathing God-exalting worship of God through Christ.

We all prize authenticity. You know robots are becoming more and more human. They are fantastic in all they can do. I went over to CamCraft and they have all these automatons doing the most amazing and precise work in engineering. They are robots. They can do things better than human beings. But they are *not* human beings. Imagine your son bringing home a robot – dad, she's the one! No, she's a robot.

That's a way of illustrating the absurdity of mechanical Christianity. Sometimes we can do things to well, we even want to improve upon the Holy Spirit. Our children don't need mechanical Christianity. Anyone can put on imitation Christianity. Our children need to see us loving and worshipping the Living God.

Cardboard Cutout of the Rich and Powerful

Have you ever seen a cardboard cut out of someone who was rich and famous. It's not really them. It's funny for a picture, but it's just a cardboard cut out. What our Kids need to see is not a cardboard cutout of Christianity, but the real thing.

ble published shortly afterwards in 1560. The verse is found in Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47.

Fake / Imitation Spiritual Authority

The Scribes and Pharisees seemed to have true spiritual authority, but it was an imitation. Look at vs. 2, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit [have seated themselves] on Moses’ seat”.

Seat/Chair

The word “seat” is *kathedra*; we get our word cathedral from it. It means a seat of authority, like a professor’s chair. There was actually a stone seat at the front of most synagogues, and rabbis sat down to teach. Jesus had done this himself when he preached his first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:20). We preserve the idea when we speak of a professorial “chair” at a university.¹⁶

Moses, the Supreme Lawgiver

For Jews, Moses was the supreme law giver, the supreme spokesman for God. Therefore to sit in the seat of Moses was tantamount to being God’s authoritative spokesman, and it was that very claim that many of the scribes and Pharisees made for themselves.¹⁷ They pretended to have God’s authority, but were imposters.

Where does spiritual authority come from? Let’s consider Moses. There are some beautiful verses in the Pentateuch that speak of Moses speaking with God.

The Voice Speaking from the Mercy Seat

Numbers 7:89, “And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of

¹⁶ Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (491). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

¹⁷ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press.

the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and it spoke to him.”

The Tent of Meeting

Exodus 33:7-11, “Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. 8 Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. 9 When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. 10 And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. 11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”

Deuteronomy 34:10, “And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face”. God did promise to send a prophet that would be greater than Moses. That prophet is the Lord Jesus Christ.

True Authority Comes from Knowing God

True authority comes from knowing God. Do you have a “tent of meeting”. Perhaps a physical glory cloud does not descend, because that is just a shadow, but the true glory cloud descends, the Holy Spirit like a dove rests in peace in your heart.

The authority of parents comes from the Holy Spirit. He will lead us into all truth. We do not have to usurp authority; we don’t have to demand it. If you are a child of God, you have spiritual authority.

In fact we are in a greater place than the prophet Moses. Parents who insist on being too busy for God will lack the true spiritual authority to speak the Gospel to your children.

WOE to Pretense

Jesus says in verse 13 – Woe to those who lack spiritual intimacy, and make a pretense instead! “you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.”

One possible reason some professing Christians lack consistency or integrity might be because they are unconverted. There is no substance. A person who is unconverted has no power to live the Christian life. They don’t have a walk with God. The Spirit does not move and convict because He does not reside within.

One of our couples in our church was actually in a situation where both knew *about* the Lord, had been raised hearing about Christ, but never had the power to live out the Christian life. Thank God they both came to this conclusion and humbled themselves before the Lord.

Hollow Faith

As the old TV ad said, “image is everything.” But I’ve seen marriages and families that seemed to have everything together, and you’d think—nothing could ever happen to them. And then there is an explosion. And you scratch your head. And you realize that “image *isn’t* everything.”

James says: “Faith without works is *dead*”. James 2:26, “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”

WOE #2: Replace Integrity with False Conversion

Pharisees lack Integrity, vs. 3, “so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice”.

vs. 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

Did you know that all moms and dads are pastors and shepherds? It matters not how well you know the message unless you are living it out before your children. Are you a good shepherd of your children? Parents, you are the most important and influential Christian your child will ever know.

Wherever the Pharisees spoke the true Word of God, Jesus says, we should do that. Many false teachers say true things. But the Pharisees lacked integrity and consistency in their lives.

Two Kinds of Gentile Proselytes

There were two kinds of proselytes in the synagogues. One was called “a proselyte of the gate,” a Gentile who only attended the services. He now worshiped the true God, but he had not committed himself to full ritualistic and legalistic Judaism. Such proselytes are referred to in the book of Acts as a person who was devout (10:2, 7; 13:50), as “God-fearing” (10:2, 22, 35; 17:4, 17), or as “a worshiper of God” (16:14; 18:7).

The other kind was referred to as “a proselyte of righteousness,” so called because he became as religiously Jewish as a Gentile could become. They participated in all the ceremonies, rituals, and feasts; they observed all the cleansing and other rites, both biblical and traditional; and if males,

they were circumcised. Those converts were even given Jewish names in order to separate them as much as possible from their pagan past. Contrary to their popular appellation, however, they became anything but righteous. Like the scribes and Pharisees who instructed them, they became paragons of self-righteousness.¹⁸

Only True Christians Have Power to Live for Christ

Only the new person in Christ has the power to live the Christian life. Only the true child of God can “joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man” (Rom. 7:22), and only the redeemed life, the life “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10) is able to do good works.¹⁹

Apple Tree Illustration

Imagine the absurdity if my apple tree were not bringing forth apples, so I began to duct tape apples to the tree. From a distance it looks real. But close up we can see it's an absurdity. We need to look for the fruit of true conversion in our children's lives, which is evident by the spiritual fruit that comes from the heart: a hunger for God in private prayer, self-motivated seeking after God, brokenness, repentance, etc.

WOE #3: Replace True Spirituality with Spiritual Trifles.

Pharisees lack Spirituality, vs. 5, “They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long”. Vs. 16 “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if any-

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

one swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ Verse 5 speaks of phylacteries and fringes.

Phylacteries

There is no record of the use of phylacteries until about 400 b.c. during the intertestamental period.²⁰ These did not come into use until well after the time of Ezra.

The phylactery is simply a small square box made of leather from a ceremonially clean animal. It comes from four passages of Scripture, that speak of “And it shall be for you for a sign upon your hand and a remembrance between your eyes”.

So placed into each phylactery were copies of these Scriptures, namely – Exodus 13:1–10 and 13:11–16 and of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 11:13–21.²¹

These passages all essentially point to the same thing. Deuteronomy 6:8, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.”

The leather was sewn into a box using twelve stitches, each stitch representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The phylactery worn on the head had four compartment, each containing one of the texts on a small piece of parchment. The phylactery worn on the hand contained a single piece of parchment on which all four texts were written. Three Hebrew letters were inscribed on both sides of the box worn on the head, and the head strap was tied. The three letters together formed Shaddai, one of the ancient names of God, translated Sovereign Lord or Almighty. Long leather straps were used to bind one box to the forehead and the other to the arm and left hand, because the left side was considered to be closer to the heart.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

In Orthodox Judaism still today every boy is given a set of phylacteries when he comes of age on his thirteenth birthday. Like the other Jewish men, he then wears his phylacteries at morning prayer, as was the general custom in Jesus' day.

Jesus says in verse 5, "For they make their phylacteries broad". They take the symbol and make it the most important thing. They miss the heart!

He they make "their fringes long" (verse 5). In a similar way and for the same purpose, they would lengthen the tassels of their garments.²²

Numbers 15:38–40, "Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. 39 And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. 40 So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God."

The phylacteries, the fringes, the gold, the sacrifices – what are they? They are trifles compared to actual reality! The reality must be that our children know God! They must be moved by his Spirit.

What good does all their knowledge, awards, verse memorization, hymn singing and giving do, if they don't know God. They are all trifles! All these things are not bad. God instituted these things to remind us and help us, but the pre-supposition is that we know God. If we don't know God and try to live in the symbols and outward disciplines of Christianity, these helps become trifles!

²² Ibid.

WOE #4: Replace the BIG thing (love for God) with little things (and have a critical spirit in enforcing those little things!)

Vs. 23-24, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

The Pharisees were critical about the exterior, but they didn’t have the biggest things right. They tithed of the smallest garden plants like mint and dill and cumin. But they neglected the most important matters: God’s justice, His mercy, and our love gift of faithfulness to Him. He says, you should tithe. That’s great. You should memorize the Scriptures. You need to do these things. But they are all a help to enhance your relationship to God, not a replacement for it!!

Pharisees lack Sympathy, vs. 4, “They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger”.

The Poor Donkey!

The picture Jesus gives here reflects the common custom of that day, and of people in many underdeveloped countries today, of loading up a donkey, camel, or other beast of burden to the point where it can hardly move. As they traveled down the road, the owner would walk alongside, carrying nothing himself, berating and bearing the animal if it happened to stumble or balk, with no concern for the animal’s feelings or welfare.²³

²³ Ibid.

If the people did not comply with the Pharisees, they could be put out of the synagogues. The Pharisees loved to control the lives of people, but they did not want their lives to be controlled.

Paul tells the Corinthians that we can speak with rich words and the tongues of men and angels; we can have all faith and theological knowledge; we can even make breathtaking sacrifices, but if we have not love, all that we do is worthless and empty.

Contrast Jesus' compassion in Matthew 23:37–39, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”

Parents, Do You Know Your Children?

Do you love them enough to point them to Christ for the power to do what is right? You can bind heavy burdens on them, but they can never lift them without the power of the new birth. Do you know this? Do you care for their soul?

Do you have a walk with God? Do you have a love relationship with Him? Is the Holy Spirit enough to convict your children, or do you have to give them more and more mechanical Christianity?

Holy Spirit's Conviction is Key to Change

The Pharisee's did not rely on the Holy Spirit to convict of “sin, righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:8). Their preferred *method* was to use guilt and excessive control to conform behavior. God's method is to convert the heart to change behavior.

Are you pointing your children to Christ when they fail? When they fall under the weight of Christ's requirements

and they sin and are selfish, do you point them to Christ or shame them? Do you have a godly sympathy for your children?

WOE #5: Replace Humility with Spiritual Pride.

Vs. 25, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

Pharisees lack Humility, vs. 6-7, “and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues 7 and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.”

The answer to almost every spiritual problem your child has answered by Peter in 1 Peter 5:5, “God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble!” Or as David said in Psalm 34:18, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”

The Pharisees’ true motivations were “greed and self-indulgence” (verse 25). They were feeding the flesh, but couched in spiritual pride.

The greatest example a child can have is that of a humble mother and father who know they are sinners worthy of the God’s eternal punishment. The kind of broken home that God loves is to have a mother and father with a broken heart. Do you have a broken heart for your children? Are you gentle with them? Are you serving them up the Gospel or do you think they are there to serve you? Take the TIME to serve your children. Spend time with them. They should know you intimately.

Humble yourself through prayer. Pray for them. Gather them around you each night and pray for them by name.

Then let them pray and listen to their spiritual heartbeat. If your children see you on fire with a broken, fervent, joyous prayer life, they will want to pray!

Humble yourself through humble confession when you sin.

Confess your sins before your children. If they see you really want to change in your life they will want to change.

When they sin, don't act as if you are holier than thou. You tell them, Daddy and mommy are sinners too. That's why we all need Jesus. Don't just honor God with your lips!

Let Your Heart Burn for Christ at Home!

Jesus said, "This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Mark 7:6). If all our children hear are empty words, and they are never backed up by a passionate commitment to Christ in our life, then we may very well raise a Pharisee.

If we do not practice what we preach, our children will honor God with their lips, but their hearts will be far away from God.

WOE #6: Replace Spiritual Life with Spiritual Smokescreens.

Matthew 23:8-10, "But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. 10 Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.

Vs. 27-28, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear right-

eous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

Pretence is a show. In other words, the Pharisees were not transparent people. They did not let people know their struggles but instead covered them up with spiritual smokescreens.

Are you able to teach something to the children at church or in a 5-Day club, but not willing to live it out at home? Then you are making a pretense. You don't intend to live it out.

Let's look at the Problem. The Pharisaical parent has everything in order on the outside. They seem spiritual to people at church and in the grocery store. But nobody sees the real you. Except your kids see the real you. And God sees the real you. If you think adding more spiritual activities to cover all your warts at home, you might be on your way to raising a Pharisee. Spiritual smoke screens need to be taken away, and your children need to see you dealing with sins and struggles honestly.

You may have an anger problem. Sunday morning comes along and you are having a time trying to get everyone to church on time. And you might lose it. Admit it. Your family already knows it. They need to hear it from you. The worst thing you can do is not say anything, and then act all spiritual at church.

You may have an over-commitment problem. Your family already knows it because they never see you. Admit to your wife and children that you need to say NO to others so that you can say YES to them. Again, the worst thing you can do is not say anything about your struggles, and then act all spiritual around others.

We can have all the right standards in front of others. But if who you are at church is not the same person you are at home and at work, then you are using a spiritual smokescreen.

Can you laugh at what God hates on television? Do we say “Amen” against fleshly living at church and then go home and watch it on the TV?

Do you act differently at church than at home? Do you speak to your children differently at church than at home?

These are just a few ways we can “make a pretense”. We all struggle, that’s for sure. But we ought never to make a show of spirituality with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and then act a different way with our family.

We need to deal with this because if you don’t, when your child grows up he may very likely go the opposite direction of Christ.

What’s the Solution?

Transparency. Our kids need to see us transparent about areas of struggle against sin. They need to see us confessing our sins to one another as Christians. They need to hear us praying that God would change us. They need to see us applying the Word to areas of struggle in our lives. They need to see us repenting having the joy that follows.

Time and work. Instead of making a pretense and then living for yourself at home, take that time with your kids and invest time on your knees and in the Word. That’s going to take a real investment on your part.

Begin simply. Take a walk with your family and ask spiritual questions. Take ten minutes and open the Bible after a meal time. Start applying the Word of God to your life and to your children’s life. You’ll be surprised how quickly you’ll all begin to live a transparent life.

WOE #7: Replace Total Surrender with Reckless Self Preservation

Vs. 29-33, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, 30 saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31 Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?”

A true Christian is really a sacrificial lamb that gives his life for others. Mechanical Christianity is quite the opposite. It feigns surrender, but SELF is at the heart. The Pharisees NEVER wanted to let God have total control. They were willing to even destroy the Son of God in order to keep control of their lives. The Pharisees are characterized by a reckless self-promotion.

Abel and Zechariah were the first and last martyrs mentioned in the OT ²⁴ They claimed that they would never reject God’s messengers, but indeed, their guilt is sealed because Jesus is telling them they are rejecting Him, God’s greatest messenger. They are about to kill Him!

At that very moment they were plotting to kill Jesus, their Messiah and the Prophet of prophets, proving they were even more wicked than their ungodly ancestors. They were so consumed by own self promotion that they were totally blinded to the fact that they were about to crucify the very Son of God.²⁵

²⁴ *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition*. 1994 (D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer & G. J. Wenham, Ed.) (4th ed.) (Mt 23:13–36). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

²⁵ MacArthur, *ibid*.

Matthew 23:11-12, “The greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

We must surrender all to Christ as parents. We must give our whole lives to Christ. He’s not an add on. If we humble ourselves and lose our lives in Christ, God will exalt us.

The Pharisees were desperately holding on to control of their lives. Their reckless self-preservation led them to crucify the Lord of glory.

Conclusion

Queen Mary Ship: I’m told that when the Queen Mary was retired it had been the largest ocean liner to go across the ocean. During WWII it was used to carry troops and then after the war it became a passenger liner. Then in 1967 it was retired to become a floating restaurant. When they brought it back to refurbish it, I’m told that they removed the three smoke stacks, and they were to repair them. The problem was, when they set them upon the deck, they disintegrated. You see, they had been covered with 30 coats of paint, and when they looked at it all of the steel had rusted away and all that was left was paint. *The substance was gone!*

Let us put away mechanical Christianity and ask the Lord of love to do a work in us as parents who truly point our children to Christ, not an imitation.

15 | child evangelism

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

GALATIANS 3:24

Children are the greatest mission field in all the world.
How can we reach them?

Knowing God

A child needs to know who God is. Theologians categorize God's attributes into two categories: his attributes of goodness and greatness.

God is great. We remember all the omnis-He is omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (everywhere at once), and omniscient (all knowing). God's greatness is also expressed in that He is all wise, eternal (with no beginning and no end), immutable (he cannot change and is not contingent on anyone's wisdom or decisions), and independent (He exists in and of Himself as the great "I am").

God is also good. He is omnibenevolent (good all the time). He is gracious, kind, patient, and merciful. God is also just, holy, pure, and sincere. He is ultimately love and wants the best for mankind. He is not willing that any should perish.

Our children need to know this God. He is great. He could crush us. But He is also good. He was crushed for us.

The Schoolmaster

Galatians 3:24 tells us that the Law of God is the schoolmaster that leads us to Christ because it shows us our deep need for a Savior. Charles Spurgeon once said, “The Law is also very useful, because it shows us our defections and stains. It is like the looking-glass which my lady holds up to her face, that she may see if there be any spot on it. But she cannot wash her face with the looking-glass. When the mirror has done its utmost then there are the same stains. It cannot take away a single spot, it can only show where one is. And the Law, though it reveals our sin, our shortcomings, our transgressions, it cannot remove the sin or the transgression. It is weak for that purpose, because it was never intended to accomplish such an end.”

The purpose of the Law is to revive the reality and presence of sin in all humanity—to make it obvious, to reveal and show it to every man, so that they will see the absolute necessity of coming to Christ! This key has been lost in our day!!

Charles Spurgeon, called the Prince of Preachers, also stated, “I do not believe that any man can preach the Gospel who does not preach the Law. The Law is the needle, and you cannot draw the silken thread of the Gospel through a man’s heart unless you first send the needle of the Law to make way for it.”

The Corruption of All Mankind

The unbeliever, even though it is obvious that he is not good, still proclaims his own righteousness. Proverbs 20:6, “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?”

The Bible tells us that, without Christ, man is corrupt and filthy. Psalm 14:3, “They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.” (See also Romans 3:10-12). Or consider Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

Someone said, “The Law doesn’t help us; it just leaves us helpless. It doesn’t justify us; it just leaves us guilty before the judgment bar of a holy God.” This is so true. This is why an effective way for bringing our children to Christ is by teaching them the Law to bring conviction and then teach them the Gospel to bring them salvation and comfort.

Teaching the Law to Children

Teach the following commandments to your children. They need not know the verse references. Use God’s law as a schoolmaster that will lead your children to Christ. Have even your young children memorize them. God will use these commandments in their hearts later, even if they do not understand the words now. The law is the mirror that shows us our deep need of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Q. What is the first commandment? A.Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3).
2. Q. What is the second commandment? A.Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image (Exodus 20:4).
3. Q. What is the third commandment? A.Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain (Exodus 20:7).
4. Q. What is the fourth commandment? A.Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8).

5. Q. What is the fifth commandment? Honor thy father and thy mother (Exodus 20:12).
6. Q. What is the sixth commandment? A.Thou shalt not kill (Exodus 20:13).
7. Q. What is the seventh commandment? A.Thou shalt not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).
8. Q. What is the eighth commandment? A.Thou shalt not steal (Exodus 20:15).
9. Q. What is the ninth commandment? A.Thou shalt not bear false witness (Exodus 20:16).
10. Q. What is the tenth commandment? A. Thou shalt not covet (Exodus 20:17).

Shepherding Our Children to Christ

The purpose of the law is not to make us and our children righteous—it is to act as a mirror to show our sin stain, and our need for Christ. It is the parent's duty to shepherd their children to see their need of Christ. We see that this was the manner of God's people of old as we see in the book of Deuteronomy.

After giving the 10 Commandments, Moses says in Deuteronomy 6:4-7, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them dili-gently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when

you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” We also ought to teach God’s law diligently to our children.

Explaining the Commandments

Have your child or children learn to explain the commandments in simple terms. I like to begin with number 10 and go backwards.

10. Q. What does it mean to covet? A. It means to whine and fuss and get my own way. It means to be greedy and selfish and self-centered, never thinking of others.

9. Q. What does it mean to bear false witness? A. It means to tell lies, to be sneaky, to hide the truth, to exaggerate the truth, or not tell the whole truth.

8. Q. What does it mean to steal? A. It means to take something that belongs to someone else without their permission. Someone who steals is called a thief. The heart of a thief is never to share or to give to others, but to take and be selfish. This is especially seen when children are playing with toys. If someone takes your toy, what should you do? You should give them two, because Jesus said, “ if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you” (Matt. 5:41-42).

7. Q. What does it mean to commit adultery? A. It means to leave your husband or your wife. God tells mommies and daddies to stay together forever, because God has joined them together (Matt. 19:6). God also says that we are not to commit spiritual adultery and turn our back on Him (James

4:4). [For older children you can also tell them that Jesus tells us that if we look on another person with lust we have committed adultery with them already in our heart—Matt. 5:28].

6, Q. What does it mean to kill? A. It means to take someone's life or to murder. But Jesus says, we are not even to call someone a bad name. Jesus says that's the same thing as murder because we are discounting them as a human being—Matt. 5:21-22.

5. Q. What does it mean to honor father and mother? A. It means to obey them—immediately, completely, and sweetly (with a happy attitude). This commandment includes honoring all authority (teachers, police, church and civic leaders).

4. Q. What does it mean to keep the Sabbath day holy? A. It means to dedicate one day out of seven to God for His worship with His people. Since the creation of the world, all of God's people have given God a day to reflect on Him and worship Him. Christians worship on Sunday because it is the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

3. Q. What does it mean not to take God's Name in vain? A. It means to blaspheme God's name and treat it in a common way. We are forbidden from referring to God or any of His works or attributes in a vain way. We are not to say things like, "O my Word" for God's Word is sacred, or "Mercy me!" because God's mercy is sacred. We are not to say "O Gosh" because a euphemism is the same as saying the actual word. There are many other ways of blaspheming God, such as in curse words. It is also taking God's Name in vain for a person to call themselves a Christian and live contrary to God.

2. Q. What does it mean not to make graven images? A. It means to make God in man's image, or to twist my understanding of Him to be like a created being. I can do this by making a statue of wood or stone and calling it God. Or I can simply say, "To me God is..." and decide what I want God to be. God has revealed Himself to us in the Bible alone. To change what He is in my own imagination is idolatry.

1. Q. What does it mean to have no other gods before God? A. It means to seek God first above all other things and people. Jesus would say things like, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Deep Conviction

The result of using the law in this way is the breaking up the fallow ground of the heart. The child begins to realize that God is just and cannot overlook sin. There is a day coming when God will repay us for all the good and evil we have ever done. God "has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). He says "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a). The destiny of all people who have sinned at least one time is eternity in the Lake of Fire. He says "as for...all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

The realization of God's justice will result in a brokenness and conviction over sin in the child. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is during the times of this brokenness that it is best to give the Gospel.

God is Love

The child now needs to know that God is love and has reached out to us. God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8), but this does not mean He lowers His standard of perfect holiness. God has provided a way to satisfy His holy nature and His righteous wrath against our sin. “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18). Jesus Christ, God’s perfect Son, was crucified in your place and paid the penalty of eternal hell for you, if you will believe. Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6).

God will exchange our sinful deeds for Jesus’ righteous deeds. God “made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). When you believe that Jesus died for your sins and in your place, Jesus exchanges your record of sin with His perfect record of righteousness. You would then have a perfect record for the Day of Judgment.

God promises to give your child a new heart. When we believe in Christ, God also promises to transform us! He says, “...from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (Eze. 36:25-27). All who are part of God’s kingdom have been born again. Jesus said, “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3).

Giving the Gospel

Children and all people have an inner sense of condemnation. It is also a reality that is taught to them by the condemnation brought by our conscience. We need to show them that there is “no condemnation” for the one who places their faith in Christ. That Christ is the “end of the Law” for the one who comes to God by faith in Christ. Christ answers and satisfies the just demands of the high and holy law of God.

The Good News

The good news is clearly given in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” By trusting that God loves them and that He sent His Son to perish so that they would not, they can be born again.

Let God Work

Let God do the work in your child’s heart. It is not the parent’s duty to save the child. That is God’s work. We must leave the comfort and assurance of salvation up to the Holy Spirit.

Facilitate God’s Love

There are ways that we can facilitate the love of Christ to envelope our children. Pray with them. Let them listen to your prayers to God and how God is merciful and loving and kind and gracious to you. They will likely not come to Christ if they do not see Christ in you. Read the Bible with them. This cannot be a textbook assignment to you to “have your devotions”. They need to see the vitality of Christ to your life and how you need Him and are refreshed by His Word.

We can trust God to save our children, but we also need to realize that we are instruments in His hands. Mom and Dad are the greatest missionaries in all the world!

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16 | spiritual disciplines for home

*I have planted, Apollos watered;
but God gave the increase*
1 CORINTHIANS 3:6

Think about how much attention people pay to their finances and how little people care about their soul. “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). Have you ever been frustrated with not having enough time for family devotions? Perhaps you don’t even know where to start. This morning we will see how through family devotions you can plant and water the Gospel seed and watch God give the increase.

First, we must understand from the Bible that we are called to train our children. Godly kids don’t happen by accident!!

When we speak of “devotions” usually we mean a study in the Bible for a time each day. Certainly we are talking about that, but what I want to talk about is much more than that. Fathers are called to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). We are told in Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” We are told in Psalm 78:5-7a, that God “established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded

our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. 6 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: 7 That they might set their hope in God”.

Again, we read in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 that after God gave Moses His Law—the Word of God, he gave a command to the people to teach their children. God said, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children”. We are told to evangelize “every creature” (Mark 16:15) and that surely includes the children in our own home!

Realize the precious opportunity you have. This is not simply about giving Bible knowledge to your children. This is about child evangelism in the home. If you have a child in your home do you realize the mission field you have? Most of the time you have a couple hours a week with a person to influence them for Christ. What missionary do you know that gets to have someone under their direct influence for 18 or 20 (or 30!) years?

Realize the powerful opportunity you have. You are not just training one child, but you are raising up a whole generation. Do you realize within three hundred years you will have at least five hundred descendants from just one of your children?

Max Dukes and Jonathan Edwards

What was the difference between Jonathan Edwards and Max Dukes? Jonathan Edwards had a heart for the Lord. He made sure his children were active in the service of the Lord. Jonathan Edwards served the Lord as an example before his children to the best of his ability. And tonight saints of God, Jonathan Edwards knew that godly kids don’t happen by ac-

cident. It takes diligence, commitment, doing the hard thing, and persevering and not ever ever giving up. You as parents are role models. You are all powerful role models. Those of you here who are not parents, you are also setting a powerful example. The question is: What kind of example are you setting?

You Are Not Alone

When we come to the subject of family devotions, understand you are not alone in this. Lamentations 3:22-23 says “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” Jesus said, “Without me, ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Jesus promised “never to leave us nor forsake us” (Hebrews 13:5) and that includes the task of raising our children for Him. After he gave the Great Commission to evangelize every creature He says “I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

The Goal of Family Devotions

We have to ask ourselves next” What is the goal of family devotions? We don’t want our children to simply be wise heathens with great Bible knowledge. The goal of family devotions is stated in 1 Corinthians 3:6, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” God giving the increase is speaking of the new birth or what we call regeneration. It is the sprouting up of that new seed in the heart. The new birth is not something we can give to our children. It is something God alone does. We can plant. We can water. But God must give the increase.

The Farmer

Think of a farmer. A farmer cannot bring the increase of his crop. He can surely plant. He can most definitely water. But God must give the increase. Farmers experience this miracle every autumn. God says, it is the same way with your child's soul. Your child cannot save them self. You ultimately cannot save your child. God must give the increase. The God who gave your child his or her first birth must also give the second birth two. Every parent wants their child to have two birthdays. Every parent lives for the day when they hear their child say, "Daddy, I've been born again".

Metaphors for Regeneration

There are at least six metaphors in the Bible for that transformation of the spirit that we call regeneration.

A new creation. Right here in Ephesians 2:10, we read, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them".

Consider 2 Corinthians 5:17, also 2 Corinthians 4:6: "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

A new life from the dead, i.e. resurrection from death to life. Again right here in Ephesians 2:4-6, "But God...Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ...6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus". We read in John 11:25-26 of this resurrection where Jesus said Martha (after Lazarus was raised from the dead), "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

A new birth. 1 Peter 1:23, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”, also John 3:3.

A new heart—changing a heart of stone into a tender heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:26-27, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them”. Deuteronomy 30:6 calls it a circumcised heart, “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”

The good tree—changing a bad tree that produces corrupt fruit into a good tree that produces godly fruit. Matthew 7:17-18, “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”

The miraculous increase of life in a harvest—a dead seed is turned into a living organism. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”

In other words, God has to work on the heart of your children. We know Psalm 127:1, “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it”. We know that no child can come to Christ “except the Father...draw” that child (John 6:44).

You Are God’s Tool

But remember you are the tool that He uses. Isn’t it amazing that God uses tools to do His work? Paul cries out:

“How shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14). God says to you “Who will go for us?” Who will preach the Gospel to your children? I hope you are volunteering and saying “Here am I, send me” (Isaiah 6). 1 Corinthians 3:6, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” God will give the increase, but who will plant and water for him? In the Christian home, it must be first and foremost, Missionary Mom and Missionary Dad. Paul said to Timothy: “that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). Thank God for Grandmother Lois and mother Eunice!

Planting and Watering

The question is: How does a mom or a dad go about planting and watering the Word of God in the heart of their children? Now God will use you. But you’ve got to plant and water God’s Word in the hearts of your children. Your children need to get the Word of God planted in their heart and watered by you. A great way to do this is through regular family devotions.

We learn this from Deuteronomy 6. Remember if you are not planting, someone else will be. If you are not planting the Word of God, Satan will be sowing weeds. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11).

Consider Deuteronomy 6:4-9, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in

thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”.

Planting and watering begins with a Passion for God and must be the foundation of the home. “Hear, O Israel”—you mothers, you fathers—before you can teach your children diligently, you need to do this: Verse 5, “...thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words...shall be” where? On your lips? In your mind? No, where? “in thine heart:”

If you are a Christian, you are a Christ follower. You cannot make other Christ followers if you yourself are not passionately following Christ.

The Word of God Must Have Priority

Planting and water is established by you making the Word of God a Priority in your home. Verse 7 says about the Scriptures...“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”.

You’ve got to be thinking about family devotions *all* the time! Talk about a commitment! You should be talking about the biblical principles of life every time you see your child! The conversation should always turn to Christ. Look at all the situations:

Speak of Christ when you RELAX in your house—maybe for a meal or just free time.

Speak of Christ “when you walk by the way”. Take a long walk with your children and speak of Christ. Or take a drive, and ask spiritually pointed questions.

Speak of Christ when your children are “lying down” and “rising up”. This is a good time to have formal devotions.

But do you see that devotions is not just something you do at one time, but it is a minute by minute walk with Christ, and you bring your children along? It's a culture and a lifestyle of communicating our wonderful Lord to our children. This is something that has to be a life's goal for you: to mold your children into followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now if you are going to have any impact, you've got to form a daily habit with your children, and it's got to be practical.

You've got to have a passion for God to keep it going, you've got to make it a daily priority.

A Plan for Family Devotions

You've also got to have a practical plan. If it's happening all the time, you've got to be practical! Here's what you need:

A Bible. The Bible is central during family devotions. You don't ever need another book in that setting if you don't want it. There are many helpful books, but you can share with your children what you are reading.

A Mouth. You don't have to be a great orator, husband. You simply have to speak what is written in the Word. You don't have to be very creative. You simply have to be faithful.

A Godly Attitude. Attitude is truly everything. Think of family devotions as a heart to heart with your family. A joyfulness and a loving brokenness should be displayed, not an authoritarian air. They ought to see that in your heart. They need to see that you are broken over the Word of God, that you love God's Word, and that you desperately want them to love God.

Ideas for Family Devotions

What are you supposed to do? There are many things you can do and need to do. Bible reading, prayer, hymn singing, learning about missionaries, and asking spiritually probing questions should all be a part of your worship time.

Read the Bible—apply, apply, apply it to their hearts and context.

Pray—this prayer time is a great time to sense your children’s spiritual temperature. You can also teach them to pray. If they hear you fervently praying, they are likely to follow your example and remember the reality of God.

Ask probing spiritual questions. Teach them the praise songs and hymns. Pray for missionaries—use “Operation World” book by Johnstone.

What is the daily goal? To plant and water. That means the seed needs to penetrate the heart! We want to see daily penetration of the Word of God. You want to have a heart to heart with them every time you have devotions. Search their hearts to see where they are spiritually. Don’t just read the Bible. Apply it to their life. Worship God with them. The purpose is to interface with God and your children.

More practical suggestions...

If you are not having a family altar, start right away. Start tonight or tomorrow. You are preparing your children to meet God. There is nothing more important. Teach your children during meal times.

Use a child’s discipleship book like a question and answer format. There are many of these out there. You ask a question, and the child gives you an answer and a Bible verse. For instance, we use an old teaching guide from the 1689 written by a man by the name of Benjamin Keach. The first question is: what is the chief end (or main purpose) of

man? The answer is: “to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever”. Then the children give one or two verses to support the answer. On this particular one it is: I Corinthians 10:31, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” and Psalm 73:25, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.”

Conclusion

If we are learning that truth that week, I will quiz the children around the dinner table each night. Wait on God to give the increase. One thing about planting is that you have to have a lot of patience to see the increase!

Once my daughters were watching me plant grass in my front yard. I planted and watered good, and they came out and wondered: “Daddy, something must be wrong! The grass isn’t growing yet!” It’s true that it takes patience to wait on the harvest. And tonight we need to think about the harvests that are found in the Word of God.

The key is not simply having devotions, a time with God each day. You need that. But it is about having DEVOTION to God in everything you do. It is letting God be God and letting Him do the work! We need to plant and water, and then *let us wait in expectation for God to give the increase!*

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17 | stewardship of marriage

The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.

PSALM 24:1

Too many people see the word stewardship is synonymous with the words giving, money, and finances. But from God's perspective it is much more. There is a definite need for greater understanding of the Stewardship Principle.

The stewardship principle involves one's maturity and character. The presence of it or the lack of it has far-reaching effects on every husband's life. One of the chief complaints that I hear from wives in problem marriages is that the husband is not faithful concerning reasonable goals and his God-given responsibilities in their marriage and/or in their life in general.

Unless we as men learn to become faithful stewards, we will not be able to fulfill our responsibilities as a husband, and we will have many sins and failures with which to reckon. Good stewardship is a necessary path toward usefulness to God and His kingdom.

A Working Definition

Stewardship and steward are not commonly used words today. A "steward" is defined in the Webster's dictionary as a person who manages or attends to another's property or financial affairs. In the Bible, the Greek word for steward is

oikonomos, meaning a house distributor, an overseer, a manager, or an employee or agent in that capacity. Being a steward is actually being a servant to someone else and someone else's interests.

Herein lies our biggest problem as men and women of this age. Pride and selfishness often stand in the way of being concerned with someone else's interests, and stand in the way of recognizing that what I have is not "mine"! We tend to have a very strong, and wrong, sense of ownership about those things that have been merely entrusted to us. When we think of the gifts God has given us (including our wives) as our own and for our own benefit, we may wrongly conclude that we can decide what our responsibility is or is not concerning them. We may think that we have the right to do with these gifts as we please.

The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. Psalm 24:1

In actuality, God has made it very clear that no one has anything unless He has given it or allows it (1 Corinthians 4:7). God owns all things and has control over all things (Colossians 1:16). Because He has authority over them, He can require faithfulness. God says that every steward should be faithful in the handling of what he has been given.

In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. 1 Corinthians 4:2

Faithfulness will be rewarded. There are many natural rewards to faithfulness. For example, living with your wife in an understanding way will naturally result in a better relationship with her than if you live with her in a harsh or an inconsiderate way. Also, God says that He will personally reward faithfulness when we reach heaven. The rewards we receive will be determined by our level of faithfulness to His commands.

Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 1 Corinthians 3:13-14

With all these things in mind, we can define biblical stewardship in this way:

Managing, maintaining, and making the most of all God has entrusted to us for the furtherance of His interests, as we look forward to future reward.

What Has God Entrusted to You?

God has graciously given you many things. He desires that you enjoy these things and be blessed by them (1 Timothy 6:17). However, along with each thing God has given, He requires faithfulness, according to His standards, not man's. Your faithfulness is based on your obedience to God's Word (1 Samuel 15:22). In all of the areas in which God has blessed you, He has also given you clear instructions to follow. What has God entrusted to you?

You are a steward of	But they are
Your wife	God's, on loan
Your children	God's, on loan
Your brothers and sisters in	God's, on loan
Your money	God's, on loan
Your possessions	God's, on loan
Your time	God's, on loan
Your talents and abilities	God's, on loan
Your physical body	God's, on loan
Your spiritual gift(s)	God's, on loan
Your ministry	God's, on loan

God's Word has made it clear that you are merely a steward of these things. Yes, He has given you these things to enjoy, but only as you use them to accomplish His purposes. The things He has given to us are primarily for God's glory and the good of others, not self (1 Corinthians 10:31; Galatians 5:13). A selfish focus will always result in a lack of faithfulness. How do you view the things God has given you?

We must take our responsibility concerning all of God's gifts very seriously. Let's look at how seriously God takes our faithfulness in just one of these areas. God has given us our families. With this gift comes many responsibilities. The responsibility to provide for your family is just one of those responsibilities. What does God say about the one who is lazy and/or irresponsible and does not work hard in order to provide for his family?

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8

Every command that God has given concerning the gifts that He has entrusted to us is a serious matter (1 John 2:4). Some men will be very disappointed at the end of this life when most of what they have lived for will be burned up (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). All that will remain are those things that have been done for Christ. One day we all will give an account concerning our lives and our faithfulness.

So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:12

Futility's Remedy

For the believer, usefulness is God's reason for leaving us here rather than bringing us home to heaven (Philippians 1:21-25). God intends for every believer to be fruitful (2 Peter 1:8). Uselessness, however, leads to futility.

All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun. Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

Many men reach a time in their lives when they are discontented and disillusioned with life as they know it, especially in their marriages. Some become completely overwhelmed with a sense of futility. As a result, they may seek to change their lives in drastic ways. A total change in appearance, a new sports car and a new woman, unfortunately, are not merely cliches. The world refers to this time as "the mid-life crisis." In actuality these actions are usually the end result of a lack of faithfulness to God, to their wives and to the right goals in life. An exemplary husband will have the right goals and seek to apply them faithfully in his marriage as well as in all that God has given him. These right goals can be summed up as walking with God and bringing Him glory (2 Corinthians 5:9). Are these your goals in life and in your marriage?

A Bit of Hope

We must remember that God is willing to give us the grace (help) that is needed to learn faithfulness (Hebrews 4:14-16). He knows that faithfulness will be a process of growth. We are being faithful if we are actively pursuing faithfulness. However, we must acknowledge in humility that we cannot do it on our own (John 15:5). We must ask God to teach us and to help us carry out His will. God will be

faithful to do this if we are sincere about our desire to walk according to His word (Psalm 27:4-5,8-9).

As we depend on God to do His part we must also prayerfully do our part. Our part is to rid ourselves of any hindrances to good stewardship and to commit ourselves to work diligently toward faithfulness. Ridding ourselves of the hindrances means doing battle with our flesh (our self outlook and independent attitude that does not want to follow God's ways; Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16). We must be watchful of Satan's schemes to entice our flesh (1 Peter 5:8). Most of all, we must be ready to deny the flesh even when it is painful to do so.

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 1 Peter 2:11

Putting Off the Hindrances to Faithfulness

All of the obstacles to faithfulness are fleshly sins that we need to put off. These sins will stand in the way of bringing God glory, of allowing us to be useful, and of our receiving heavenly reward.

That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit. Ephesians 4:22

Time and Money

Two of the most common areas of difficulty involved in stewardship are time and money. Managing them can be a very complex challenge and our flesh will wage war against faithfulness in these areas. These areas are crucial because they can affect so many of the other areas. I would like to give some basic guidelines for handling the time and money you have been given.

Stewardship of Time

Being faithful with the time that God has allotted to you means that you will have certain biblical convictions about your time. It also means that you will seek to get a handle on how you should spend it.

Convictions we must have about time:

1. Our days are numbered by God and we will have a mortal end (Psalm 139:16; 90:12).
2. God wants us to spend regular time with Him alone in prayer and meditation of His Word (Matthew 14:23; Psalm 119:148).
3. We should seek to glorify God and be a witness for Him at all times (1 Corinthians 10:31; Act 1:8).
4. We need to make the most of the time we have been given for the glory of God, rather than be slothful (regularly idle) or waste the time God has given us on worthless things (Proverbs 24:30-34, Ephesians 5:15-16).
5. We should not live in chaos but plan our way (Proverbs 16:9a).
6. We have enough time to do what God wants us to do (Ephesians 2:10).
7. Every person needs to exercise the character quality of discipline in the use of his or her time. This means we must go against what we may or may not want to do in order to do what we should do (2 Peter 1:5-6).
8. We should consider biblical principles when we plan our time and when we make decisions about what to do as we live, rather than go by our feelings or just take life as it comes (Joshua 1:8).
9. When we have to make choices about how to spend our time, we must consider the people and responsi-

bilities God has given so as not to neglect any of them (1 Corinthians 4:2).

10. We must accept with contentment when God providentially redirects our steps (Proverbs 16:9b).
11. We should get godly counsel if we cannot seem to manage our time for the glory of God (Proverbs 15:22).
12. We should get accountability if we have major re-learning to do in how we spend our time (Proverbs 18:1a; Galatians 6:1-2).

Getting a handle on the use of your time:

1. Using a weekly calendar, keep a record of how you actually spend your time for two weeks, then evaluate it or get someone else to help you evaluate it.
2. Make a list of responsibilities and commitments, then a list of your desires.
3. Expect the unexpected. Always allow yourself a buffer of 20-30% of your planned time for the unexpected.
4. Fill out a typical week's schedule and plug in your responsibilities, commitments and desires to see whether or not you have over committed yourself. Not everything has to be done on a weekly basis. You can use a single time slot for two or more things that will be done on different weeks.
5. Use a schedule, even if it is simple, but be flexible if the Lord providentially makes it impossible for you to follow it. Keep it if at all possible.
6. Have a method of reminding yourself and keeping track of things you need to plan (a note pad, a voice memo device, a dry erase board, etc.).
7. Before you say "yes," pray for wisdom to apply God's principles to the request. Learn to say "no" graciously

when you know that there would be something else you are neglecting.

8. Control the phone, the computer, and the television so that you are hardworking and able to be faithful to your responsibilities.
9. Cut back on activities that have no spiritual or relational aspect to them so that your life can be consumed with your relationship with God, your wife and family, and your ministry to others.
10. Generally, don't let others or circumstances dictate your use of time. Follow God's principles. When something unexpected comes up, ask yourself, "Can it be done another time?" Or, "Should someone else do this?" If the unexpected thing is also a God-given responsibility, ask yourself, "If I do this now am I grossly neglecting another responsibility I had planned?" As a general rule, plan to be faithful to the responsibilities God has given you and then keep them!

Stewardship of Finances

Being faithful with the money with which you have been entrusted means that you will have certain convictions about the area of finances. It also means that you will do what you can to get a handle on what you have, on what you can spend, and how you should spend money. There are some very helpful and practical worksheets Appendix Eight to help you act on the following convictions and manage your finances, should you need them.

Convictions we must have about money:

1. Trusting God is key to handling money issues (Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:10-20).

2. We should work hard to acquire money and items to give to God and to others (2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). We need to give regularly, generously and cheerfully.
 - When there is a need the first thing we should do is pray.
 - We should do all we can to provide for our family, be wise with our money, and then trust God for the future.
3. Because it is wise and prudent (not out of fear), we should save for the future and the unexpected (Proverbs 6:6-8).
4. It is important to make the most of what God has given us (Matthew 6:19-24; 2 Corinthians 8:7; 9:10-12).
5. We should not owe what we can not realistically pay off considering our income now and any emergency plans that are in place should our income end (Romans 13:6-8).
6. God wants us to be orderly (not chaotic) in our affairs (1 Corinthians 14:40; 1 Timothy 3:2).
7. We should be thankful for and content with whatever God has allotted us (1 Timothy 6:6-10).
8. We should ponder every purchase and financial decision to make sure it is in keeping with God's principles (1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15).
 - Wise: Can you really use it? How much will you use it?
 - Unselfish: How can you use this purchase for God and others?
 - Responsible: Can you afford it? Does it fit your budget?

- Responsible stewardship: Is it the best buy?
- 9. We should provide well for our immediate family and any parents who can not provide for themselves (Ephesians 5:29; 1 Timothy 5:8).
 - physical needs: food, clothing, shelter
 - medical insurance
 - life insurance-especially on you to provide at least during a transition time should you precede your family in death.
 - disability insurance
 - emergency cash
 - retirement
- 10. We should get wise counsel if we are not confident in how we are handling our finances (Proverbs 15:22).
- 11. We should get accountability if we have trouble in the areas of self-control or greed (Proverbs 18:1-2; Galatians 6:1-2).

Suggestions For Taking Control of Your Finances:

Know well the condition of your flocks, and pay attention to your herds; for riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations. Proverbs 27:23-24

1. Know what you have and owe.
2. Devise a reasonable (in keeping with your income) budget for you and your family.
3. Track spending until you know where you are misspending and then again until you are confident that you are keeping your budget well.
4. Get out of debt.
5. Keep all receipts for at least two months and records of your income and your expenditures for

five years (even if it is just by receipts, paychecks, and bills). There are several inexpensive computer programs you can use.

6. Own your home by age 65 or retirement.
7. Learn to spend less than you earn so you can give and have an emergency fund.
8. Never finance pleasure items.
9. Pay all your bills on time.
10. Look for additional ways to give.

Where The Rubber Meets the Road

Husband, are you seeking to be faithful with whom and with what God has entrusted to you? Are you seeking to invest the things He has given you in His kingdom, or do you want to spend them on your own pleasures (Matthew 6:19-20)? The exemplary husband knows that he has not been given his life, his family, his job, his possessions, or anything else merely for his own benefit but for the benefit of God and others. Being a faithful steward will result in God's glory, our usefulness, and our receiving great heavenly reward. Decide today which stewardship area needs the most attention in your life and commit yourself to working on it.

appendix: x-ray questions

Questions that Reveal the Heart

David Powlison, Seeing with New Eyes (pg. 132-40)

1. What do you love? Hate?
2. What do you want, desire, crave, lust, and wish for?
What desires do you serve and obey?
3. What do you seek, aim for, and pursue?
4. Where do you bank your hopes?
5. What do you fear? What do you not want? What do you tend to worry about?
6. What do you feel like doing?
7. What do you think you need? What are your 'felt needs'?
8. What are your plans, agendas, strategies, and intentions designed to accomplish?
9. What makes you tick? What sun does your planet revolve around? What do you organize your life around?

10. Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, security?
11. What or whom do you trust?
12. Whose performance matters? On whose shoulders does the well-being of your world rest? Who can make it better ,make it work, make it safe, make it successful?
13. Whom must you please? Whose opinion of you counts? From whom do you desire approval and fear rejection? Whose value system do you measure yourself against? In whose eyes are you living? Whose love and approval do you need?
14. Who are your role models? What kind of person do you think you ought to be or want to be?
15. On your deathbed, what would sum up your life as worthwhile? What gives your life meaning?
16. How do you define and weigh success and failure, right or wrong, desirable or undesirable, in any particular situation?
17. What would make you feel rich, secure, prosperous? What must you get to make life sing?
18. What would bring you the greatest pleasure, happiness, and delight? The greatest pain or misery?

19. Whose coming into political power would make everything better?
20. Whose victory or success would make your life happy? How do you define victory and success?
21. What do you see as your rights? What do you feel entitled to?
22. In what situations do you feel pressured or tense? Confident and relaxed? When you are pressured, where do you turn? What do you think about? What are your escapes? What do you escape from?
23. What do you want to get out of life? What payoff do you seek out of the things you do?
24. What do you pray for?
25. What do you think about most often? What preoccupies or obsesses you? In the morning, to what does your mind drift instinctively?
26. What do you talk about? What is important to you? What attitudes do you communicate?
27. How do you spend your time? What are your priorities?
28. What are your characteristic fantasies, either pleasurable or fearful? Daydreams? What do your night dreams revolve around?

29. What are the functional beliefs that control how you interpret your life and determine how you act?
30. What are your idols and false gods? In what do you place your trust, or set your hopes? What do you turn to or seek? Where do you take refuge?
31. How do you live for yourself?
32. How do you live as a slave of the devil?
33. How do you implicitly say, "If only..." (to get what you want, avoid what you don't want, keep what you have)?
34. What instinctively seems and feels right to you? What are your opinions, the things you feel true?
35. Where do you find your identity? How do you define who you are?

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